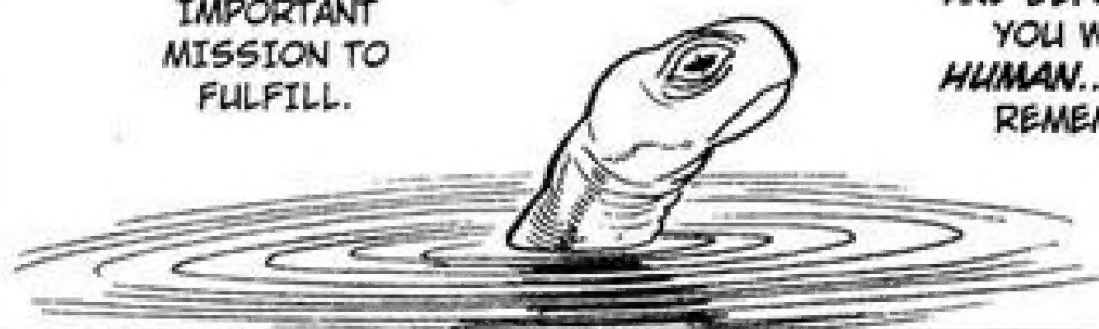




WHAT SHOULD  
I DO? FUNNY...  
SEEMS LIKE I  
HAD SOME  
IMPORTANT  
MISSION TO  
FULFILL.

YOU ARE NOW A  
**SEA TURTLE....**  
BEFORE, YOU WERE  
A TINY **PROTOZOAN...**  
AND BEFORE THAT  
YOU WERE A  
**HUMAN....DO YOU**  
REMEMBER?

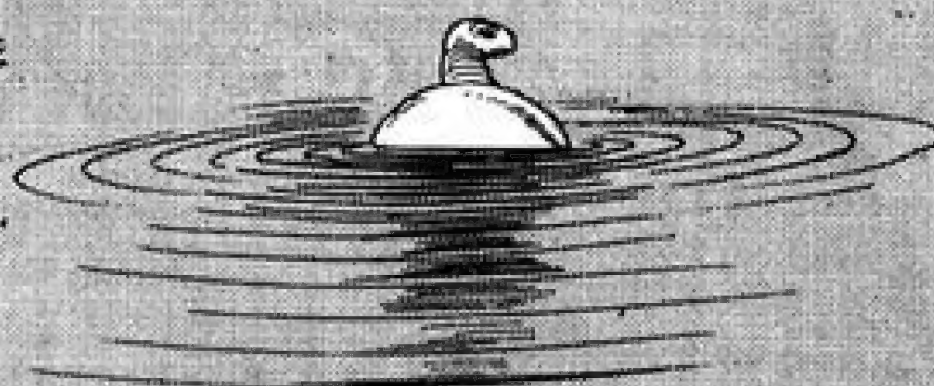
HUMAN?....  
HMM...  
I DON'T  
KNOW WHAT  
YOU MEAN...



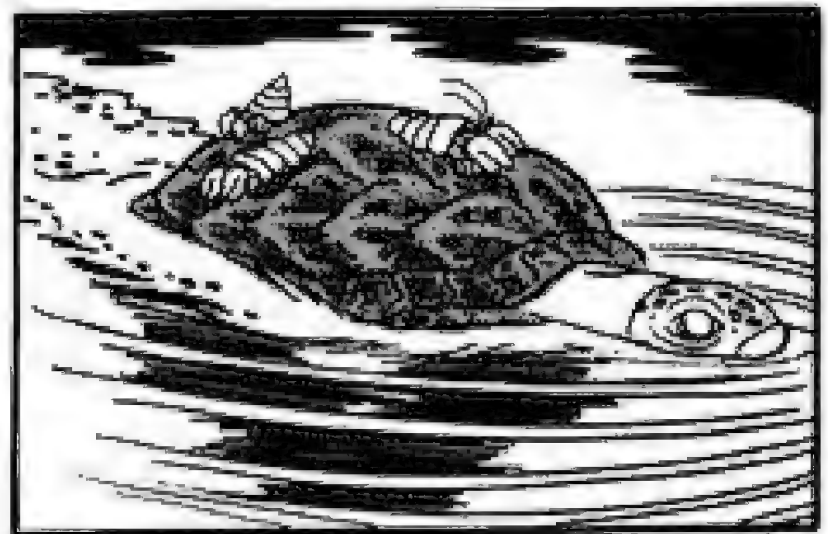
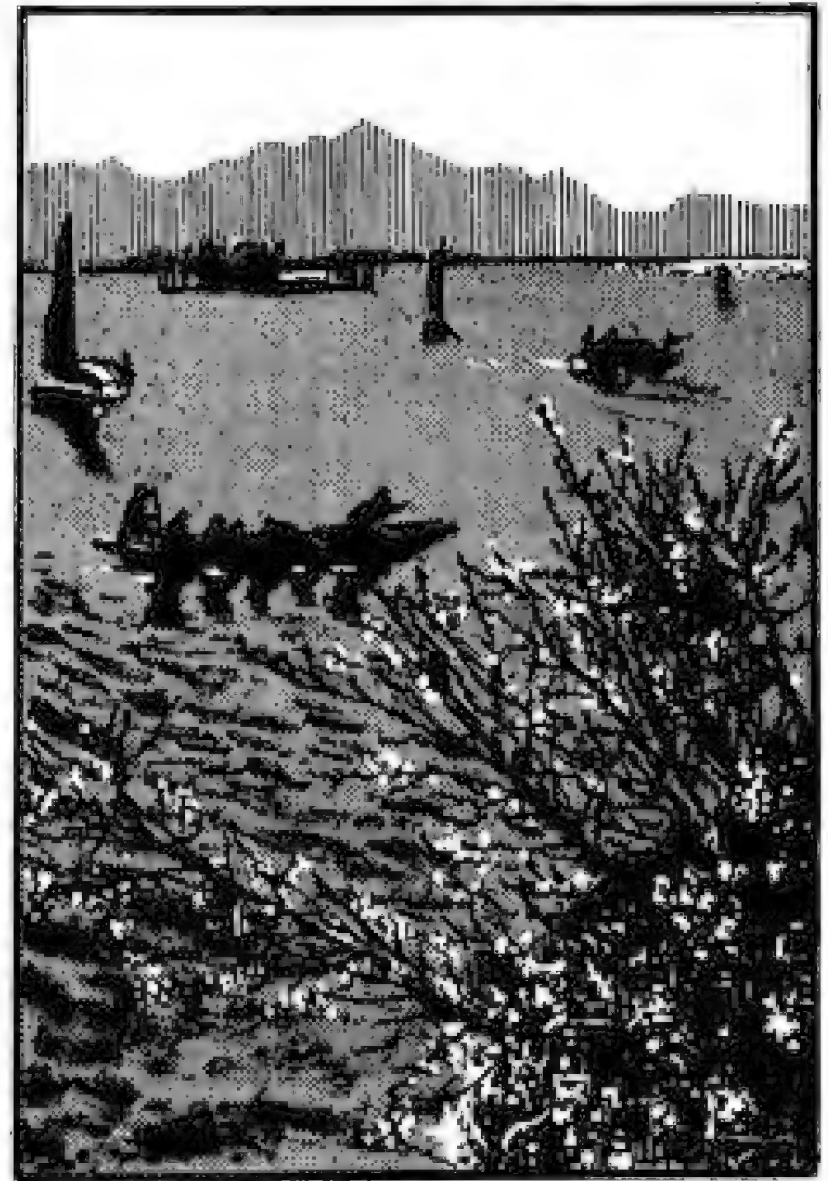
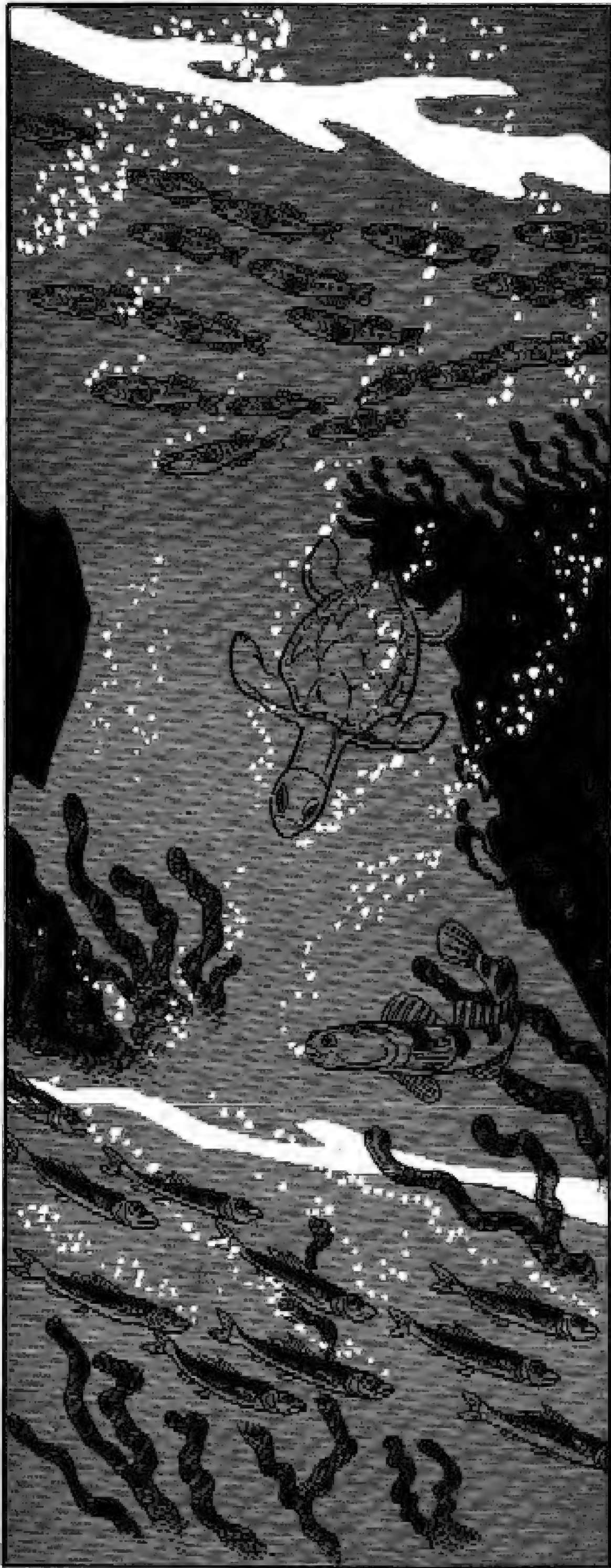
YOU  
WERE  
CALLED  
AKANE-  
MARU...

NEVER  
HEARD  
OF ONE  
OF THOSE...

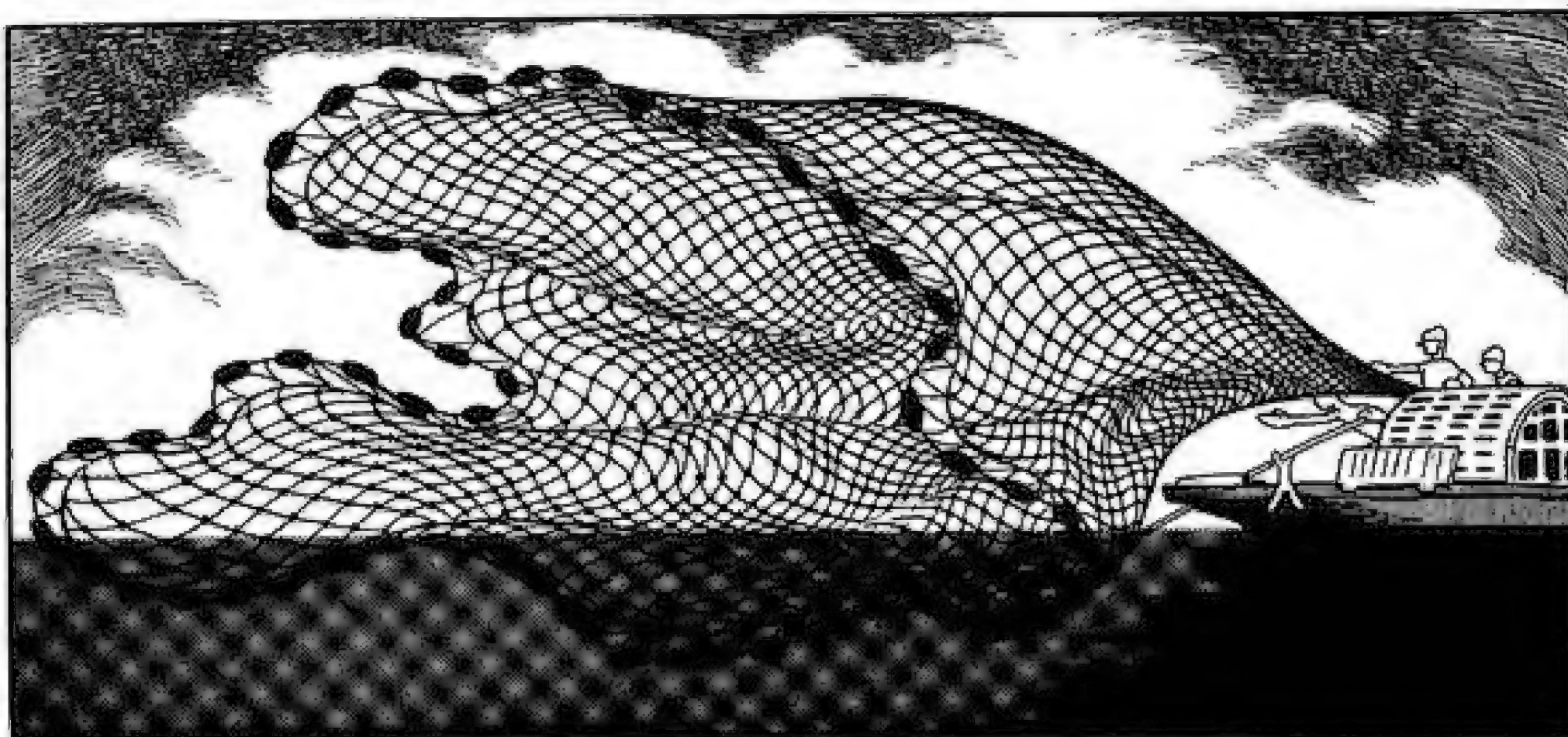
YOU ARE SWIMMING  
AT THE MOUTH OF THE  
NAGAE RIVER. YOU  
WILL LIVE HERE IN  
PEACE UNTIL YOU DIE.



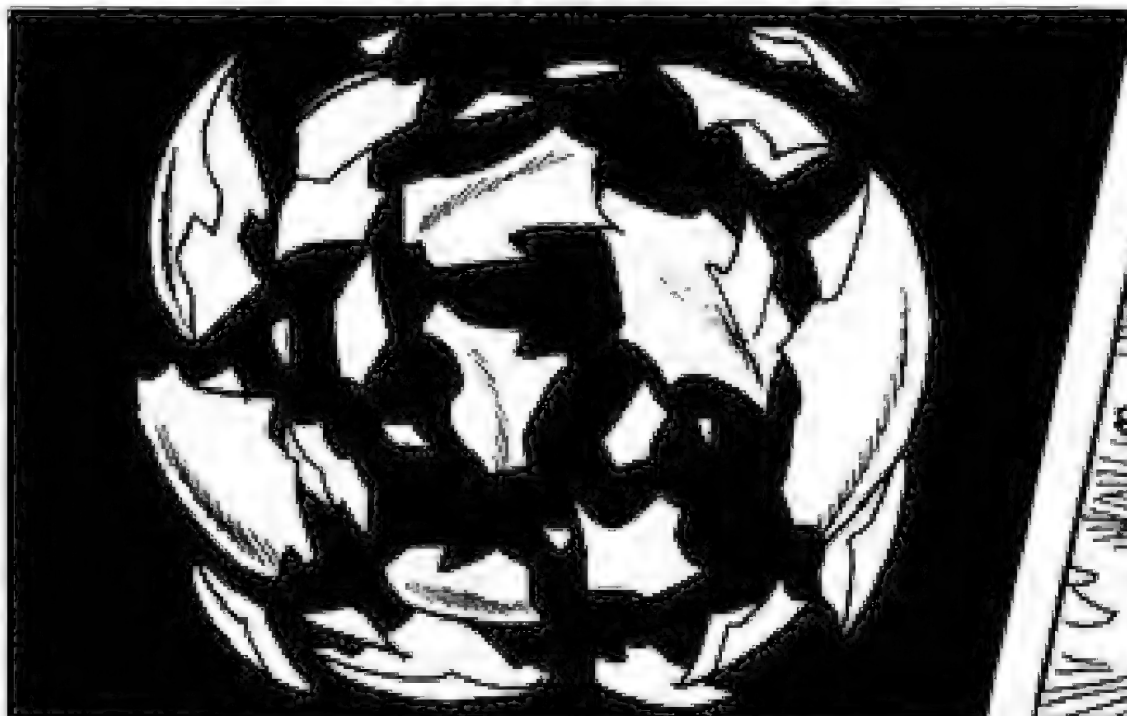
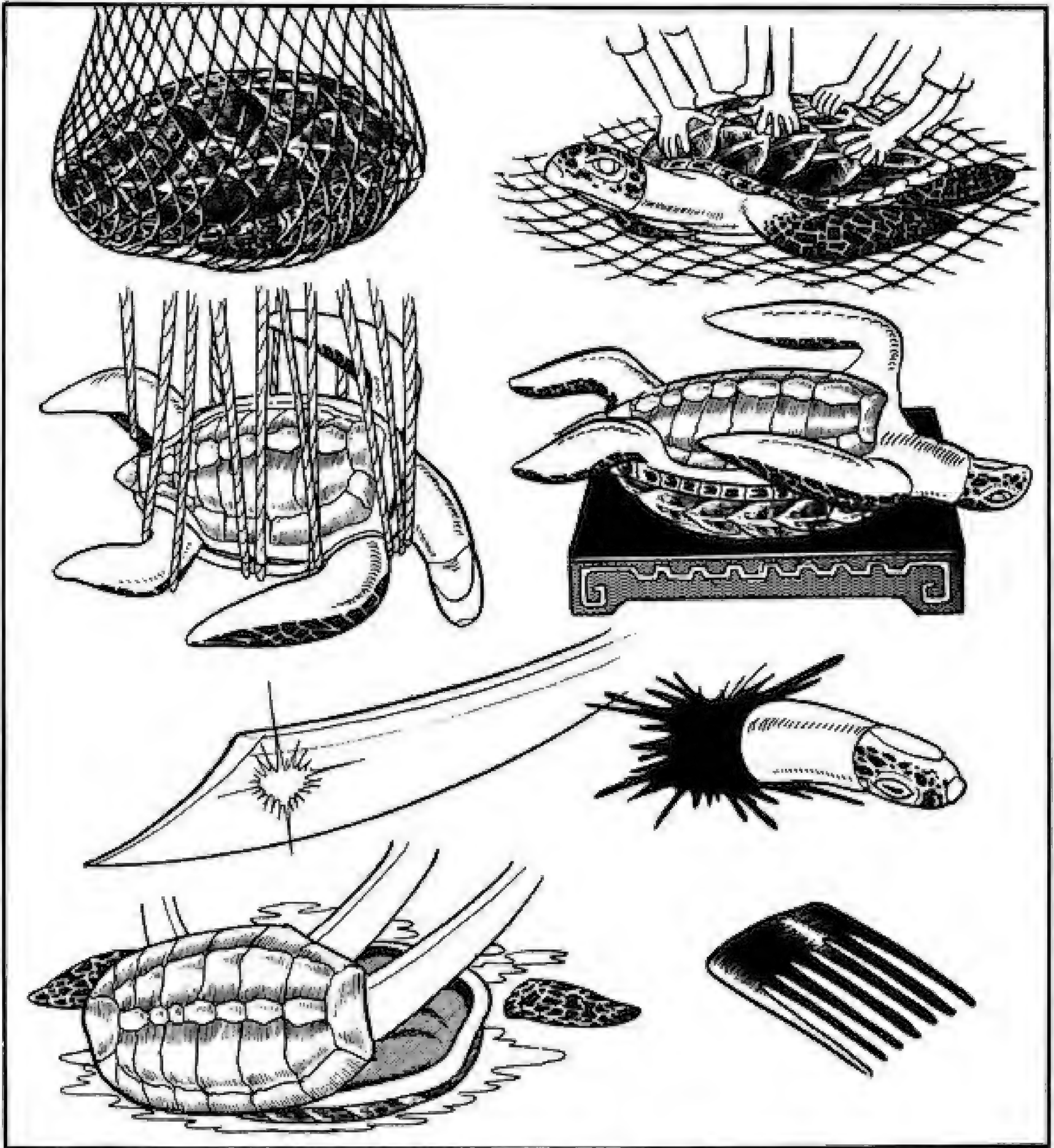




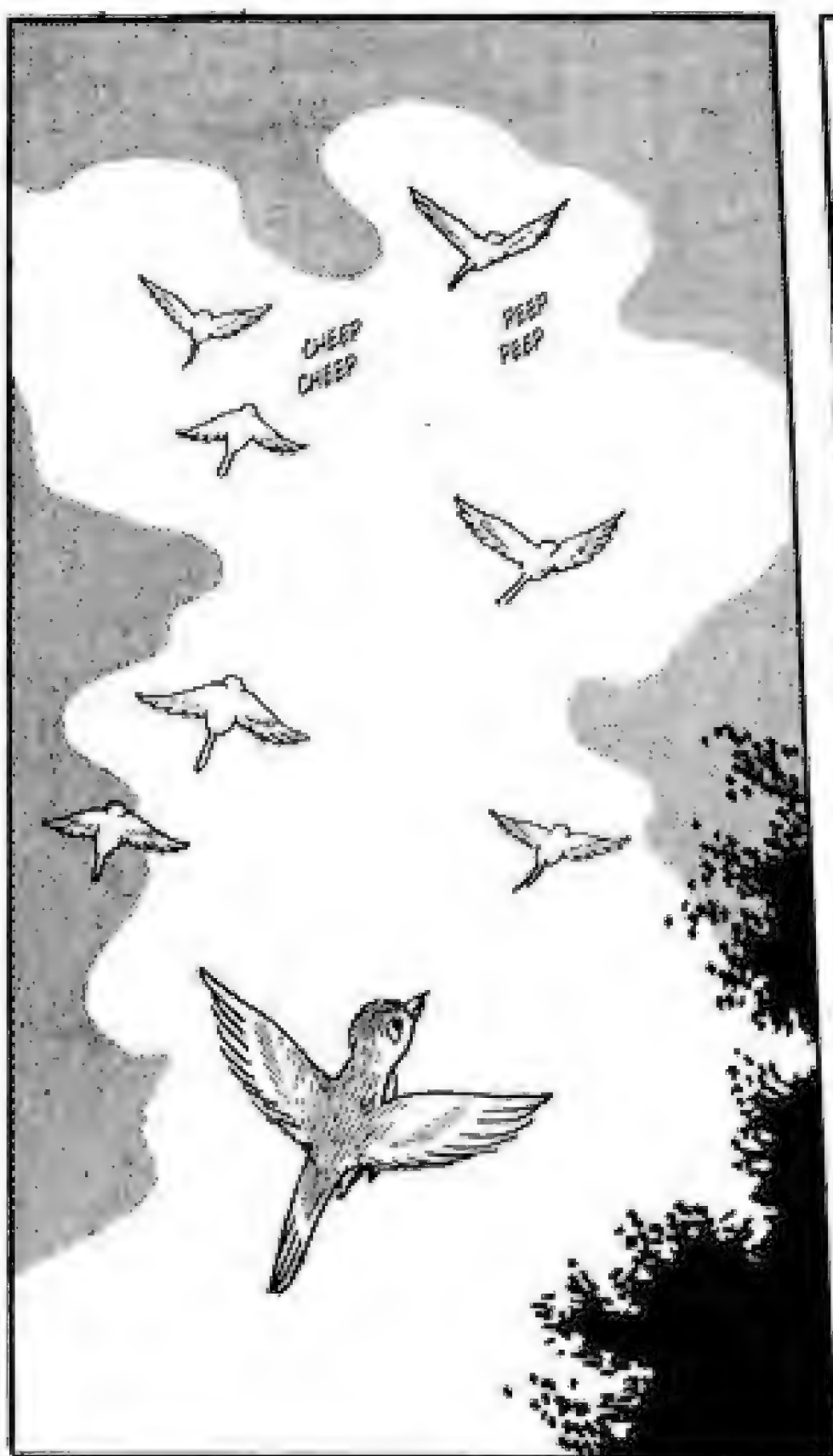
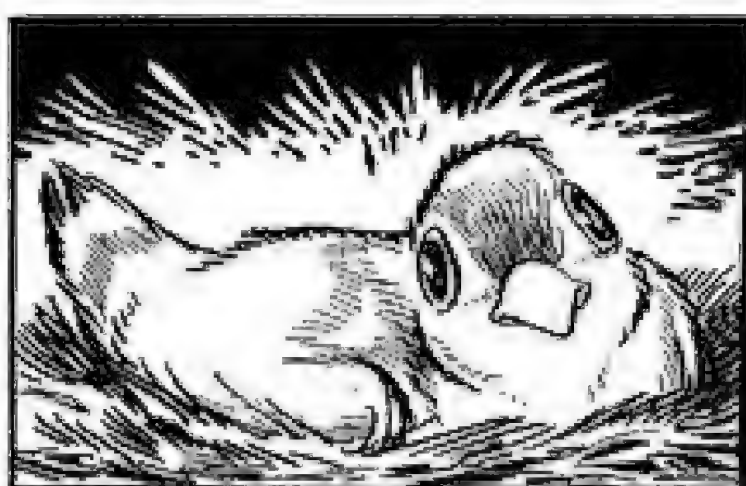




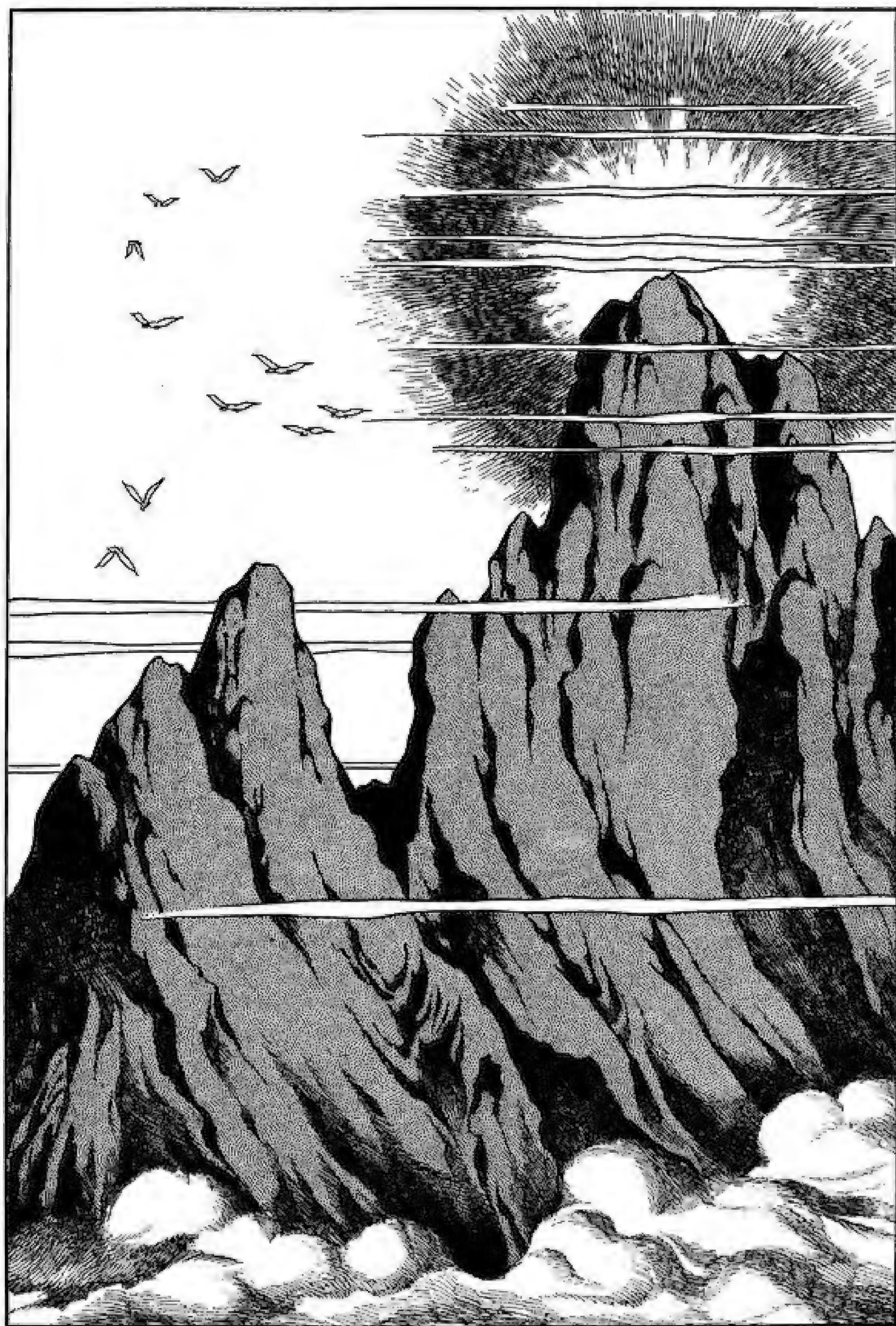




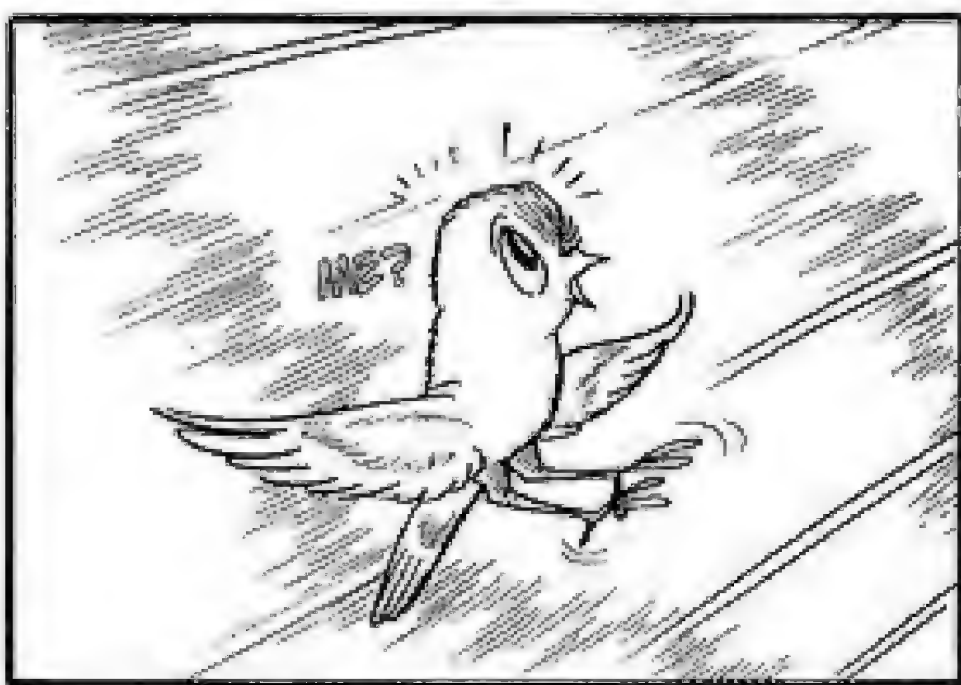




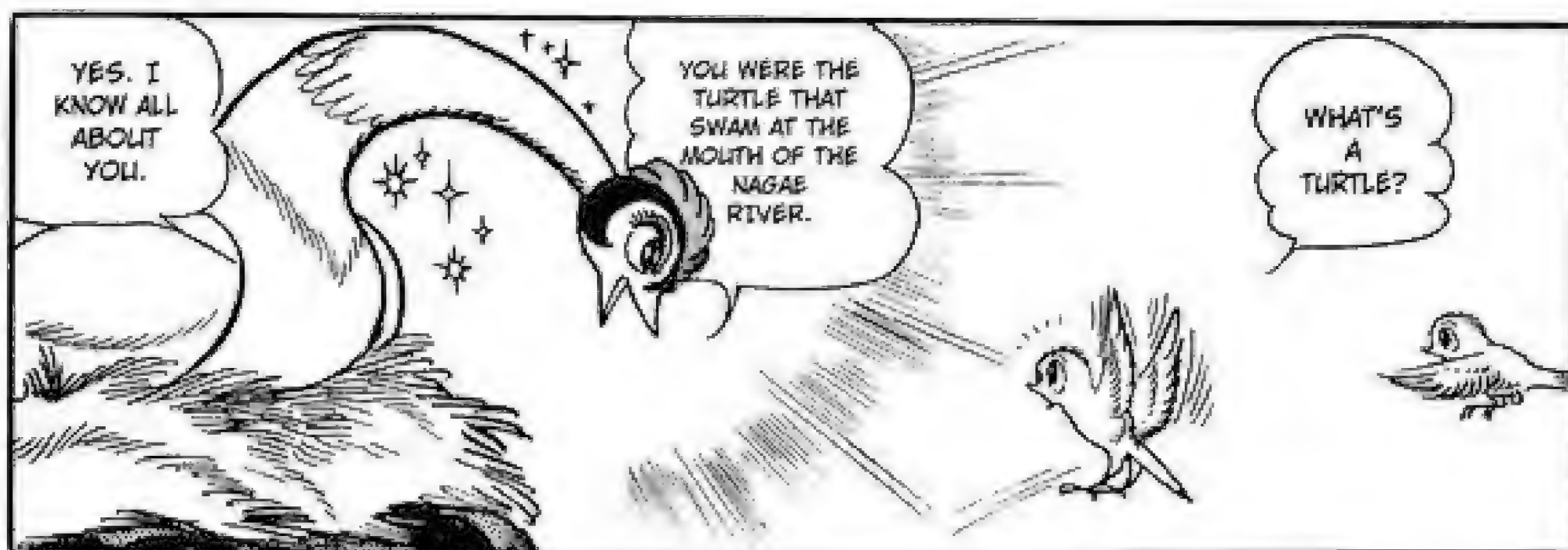








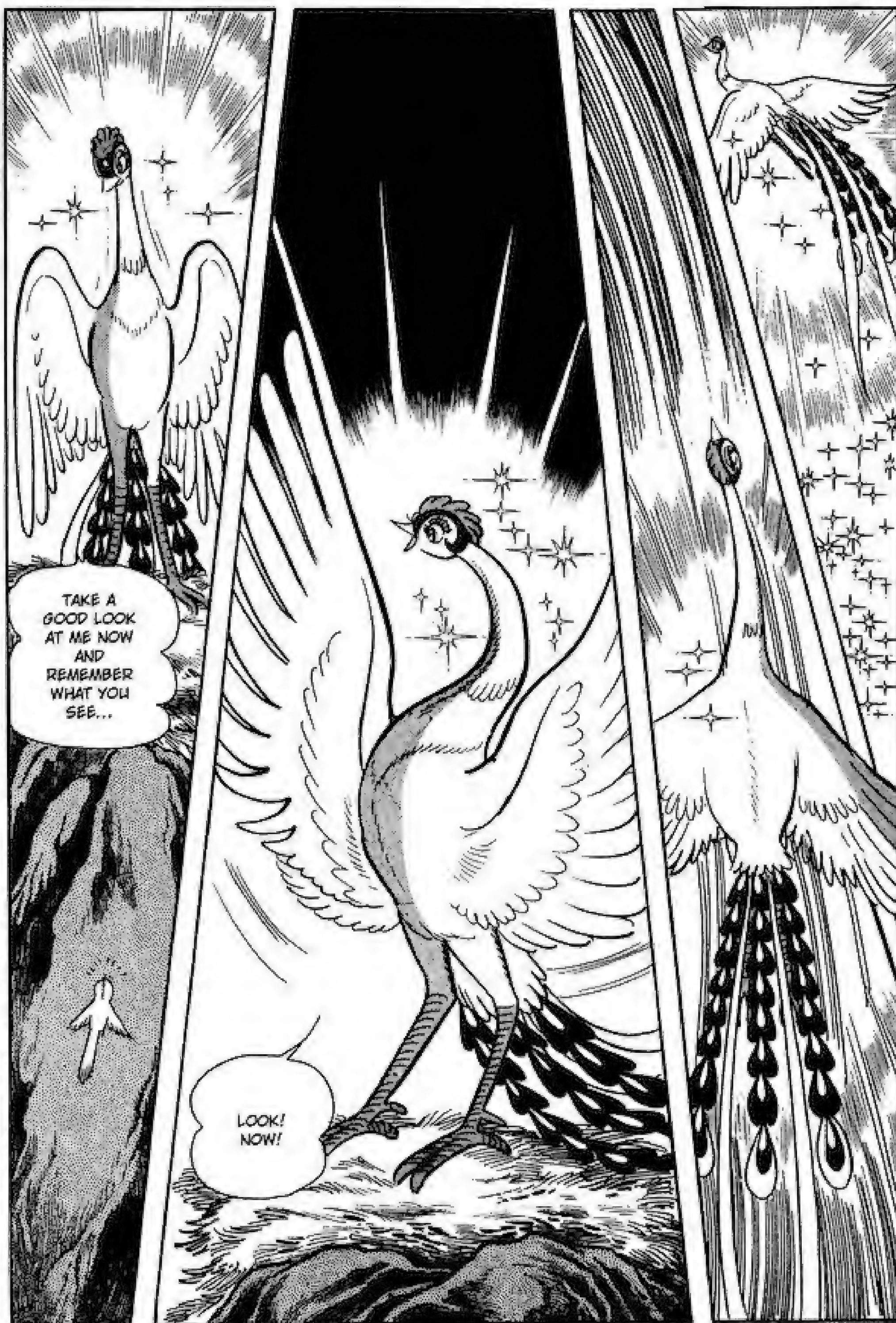




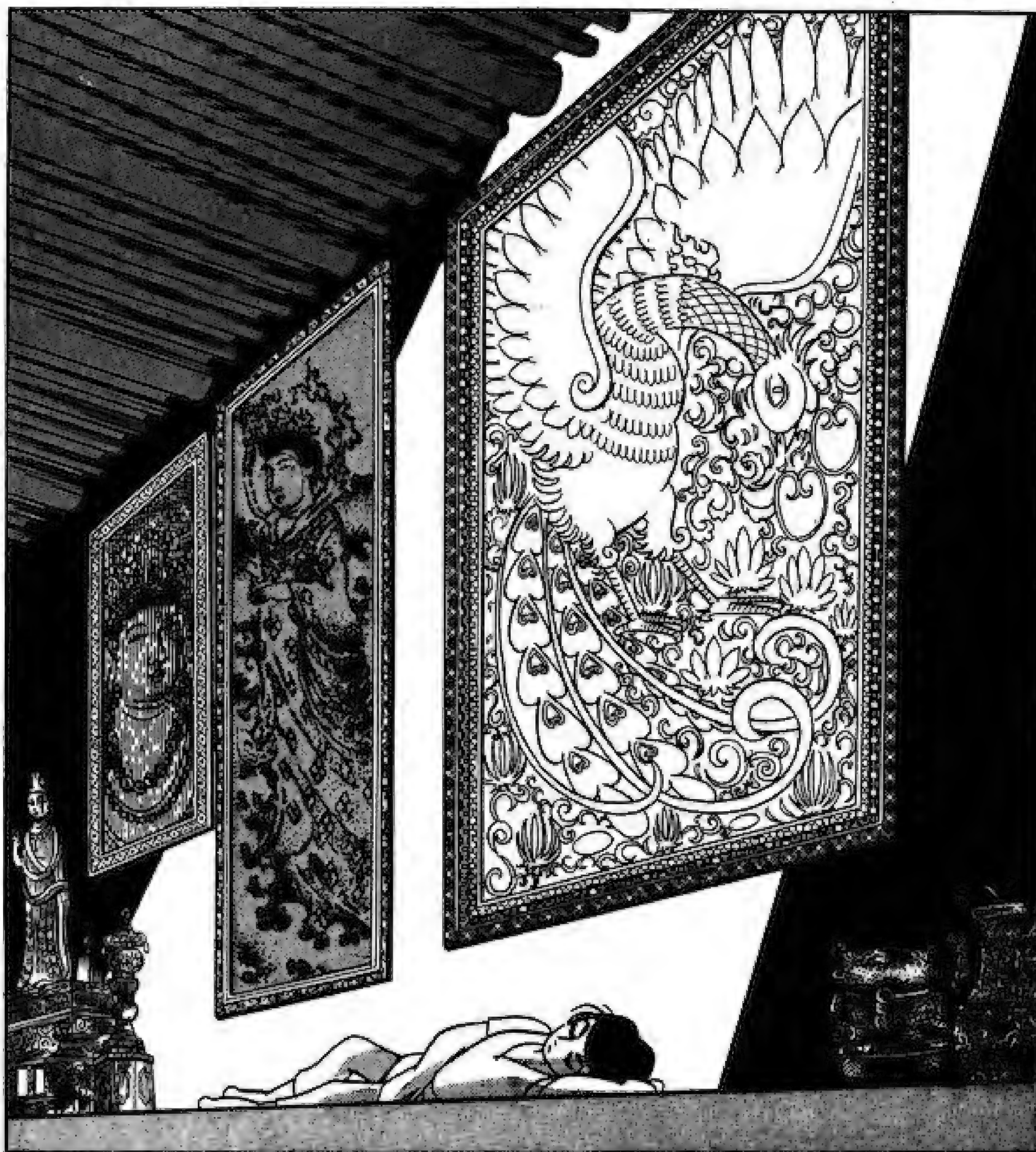




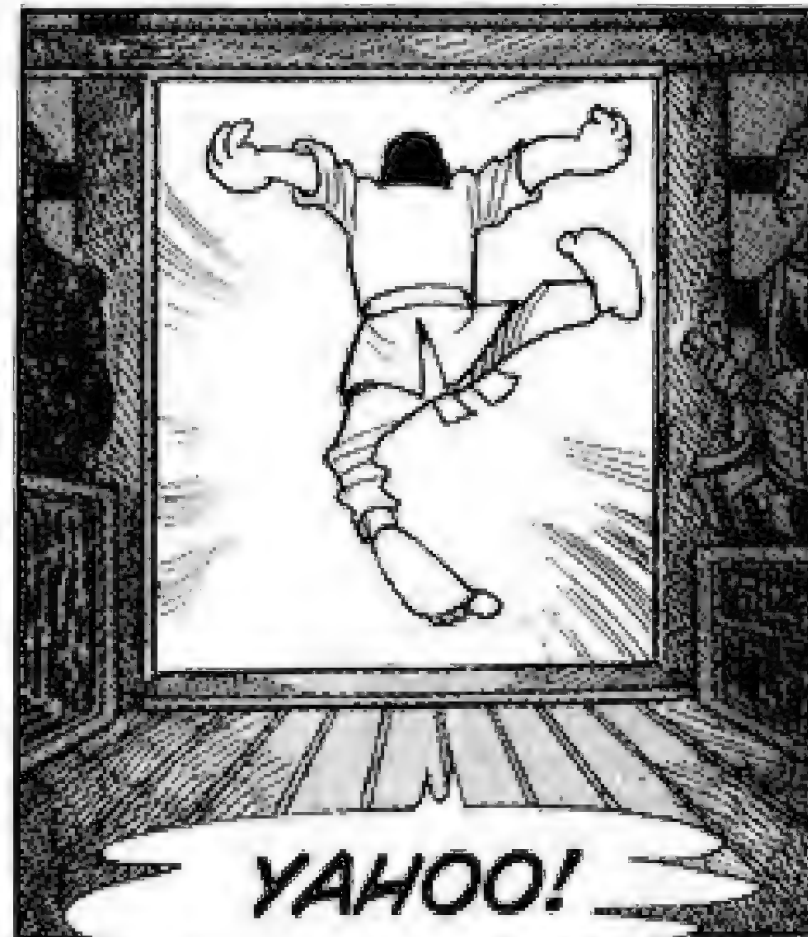
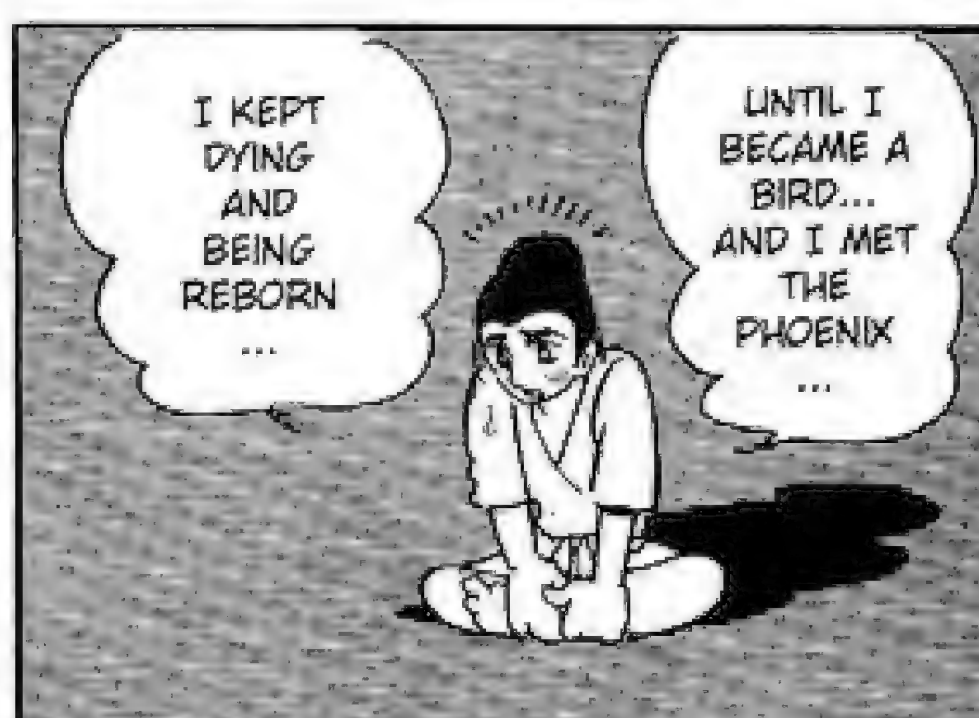
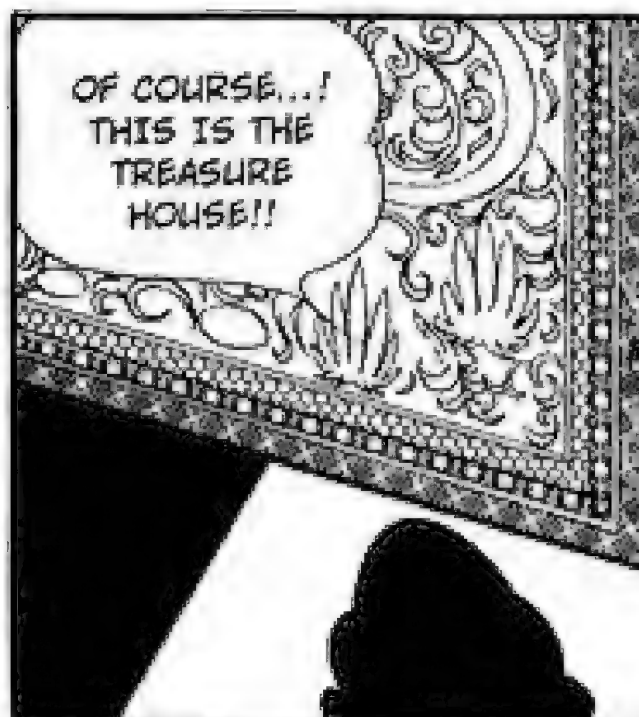
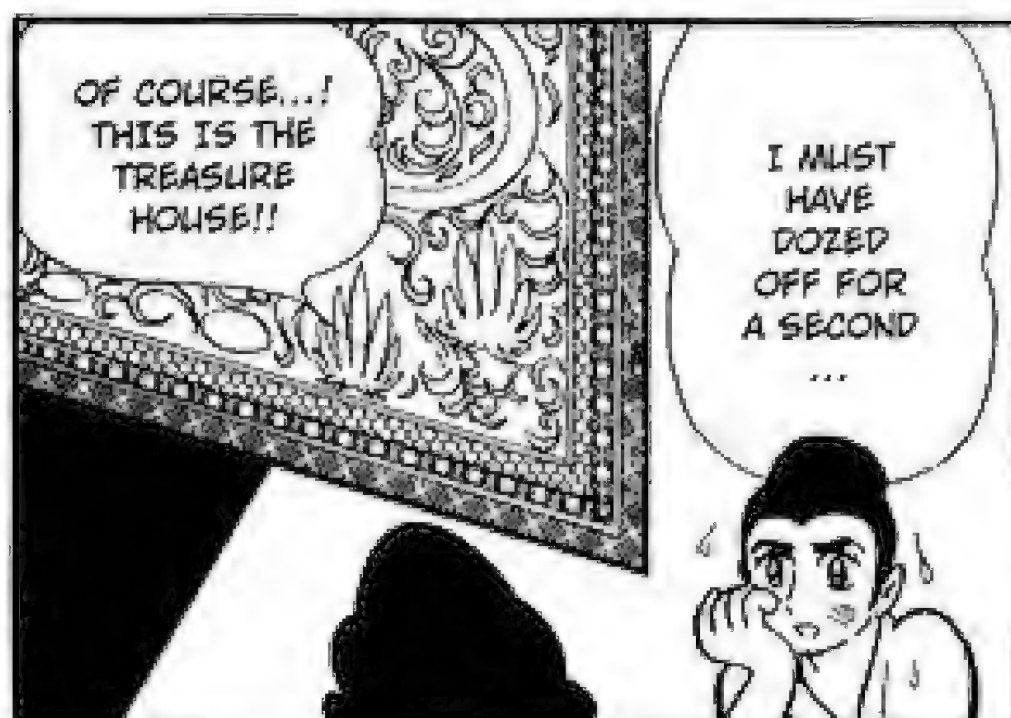
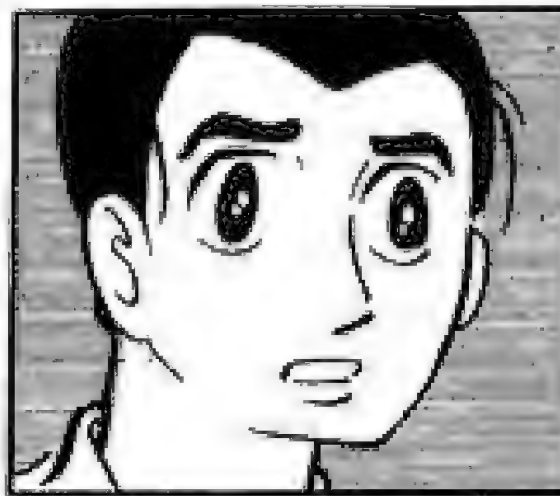








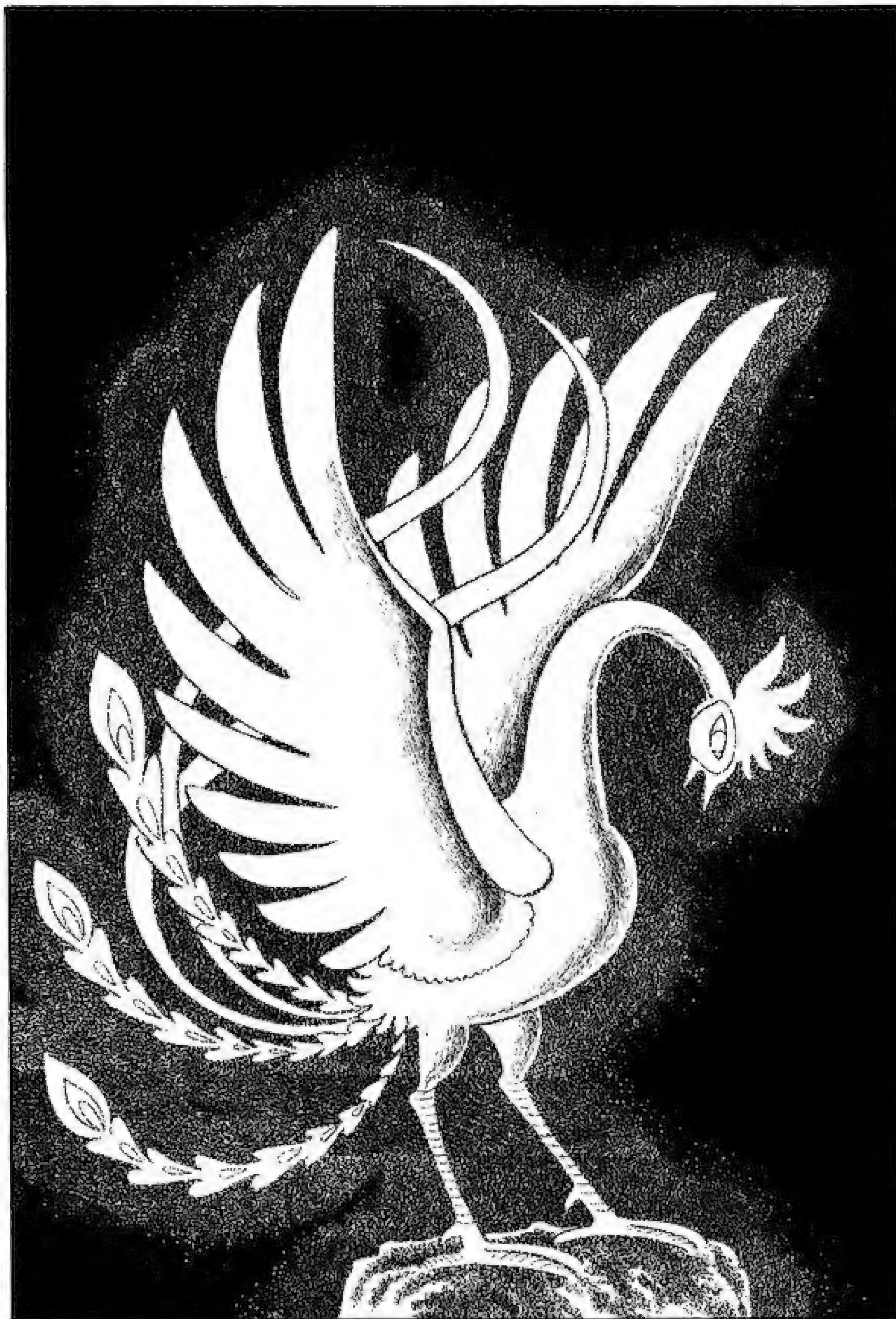




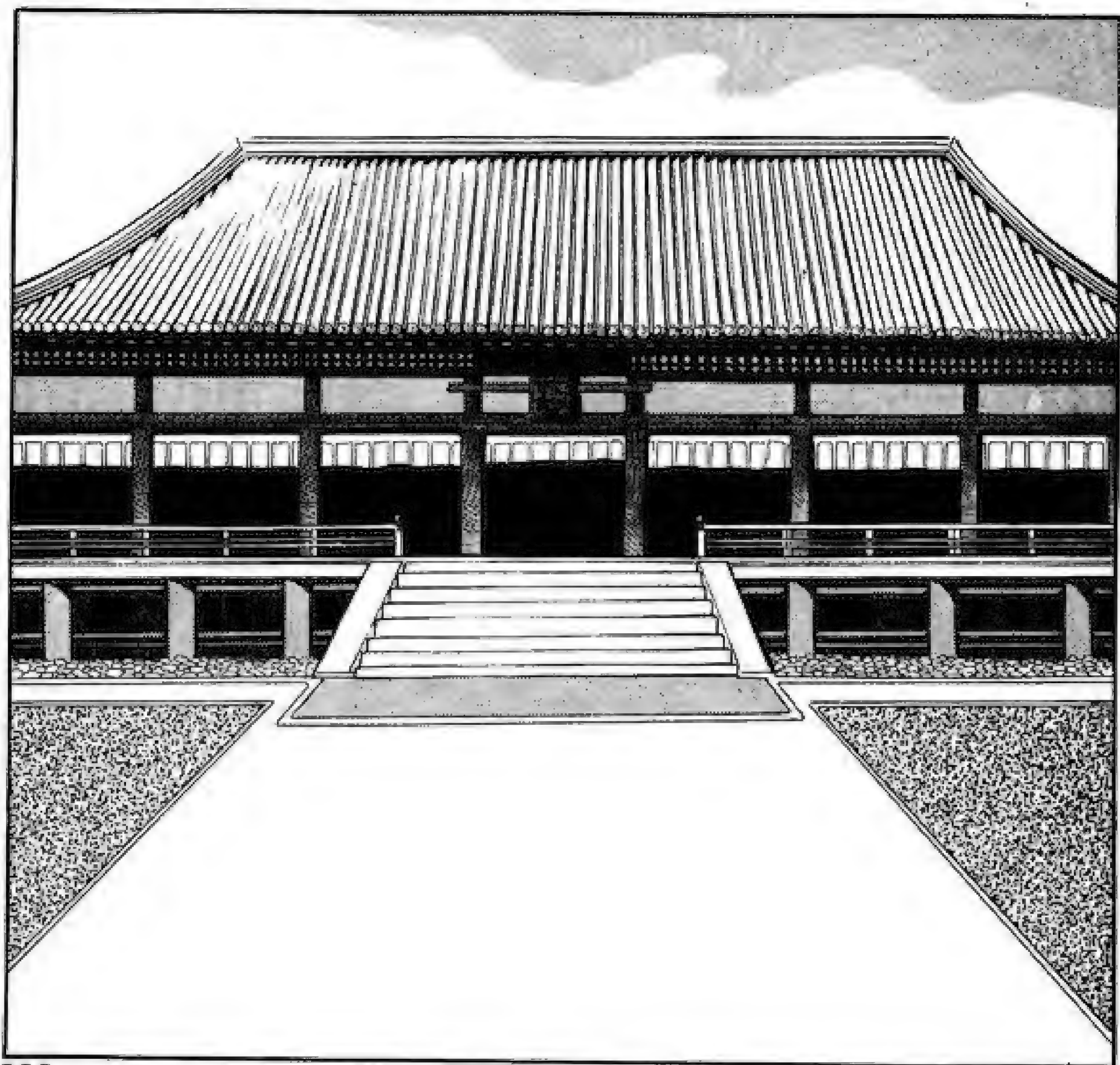
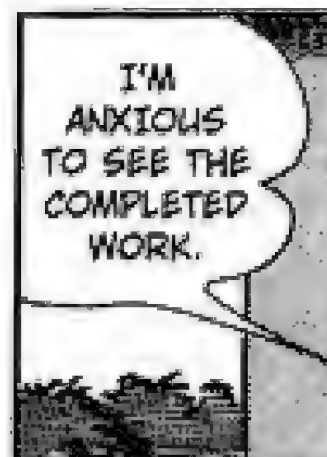




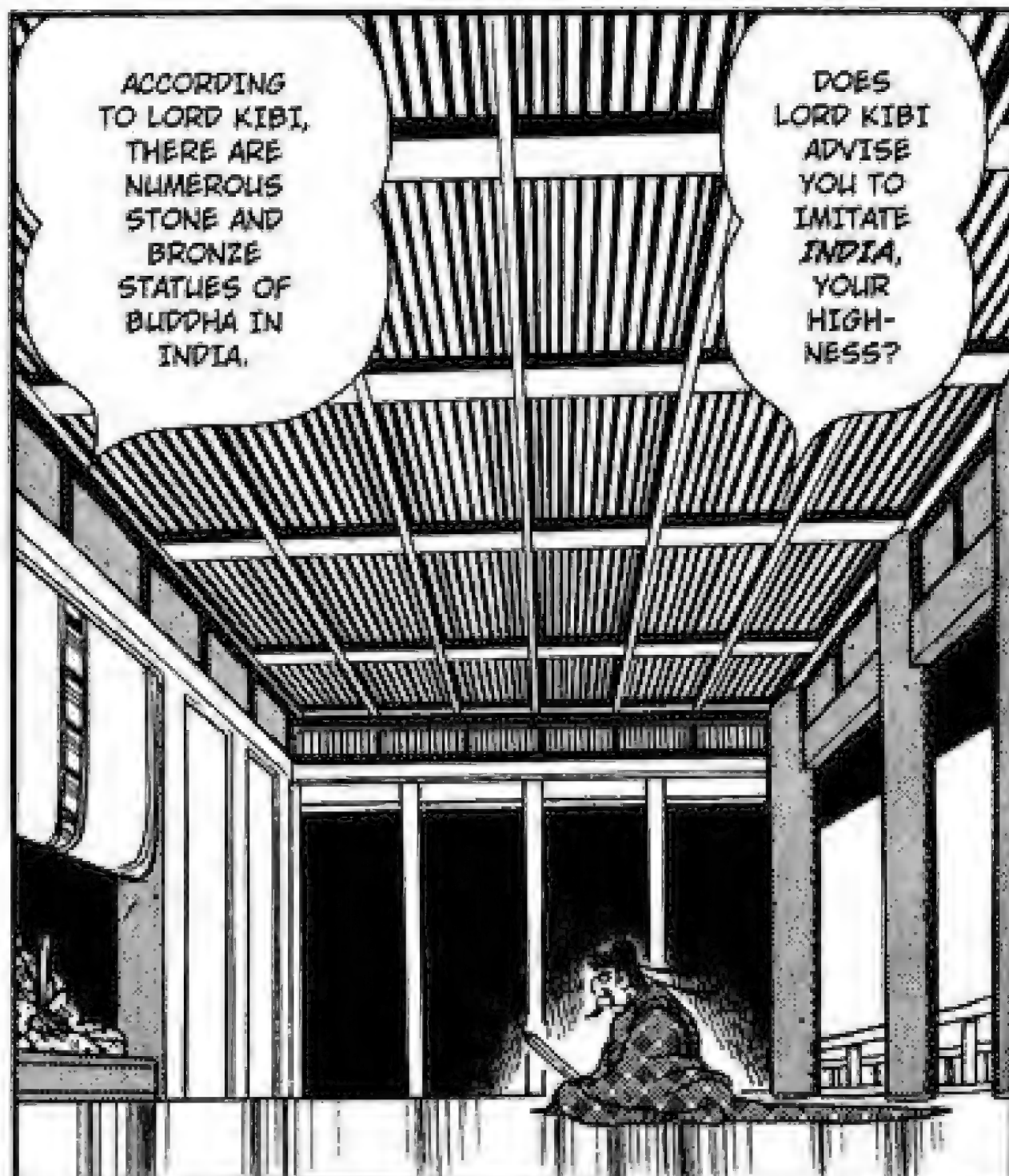
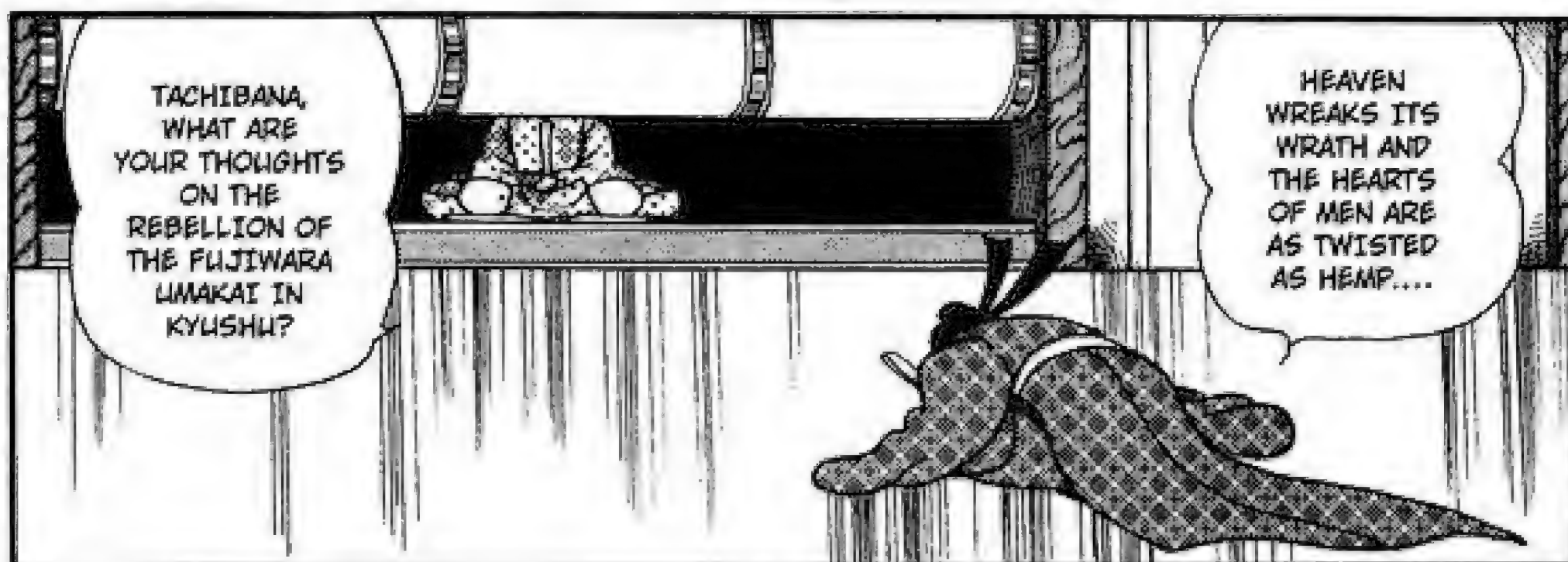




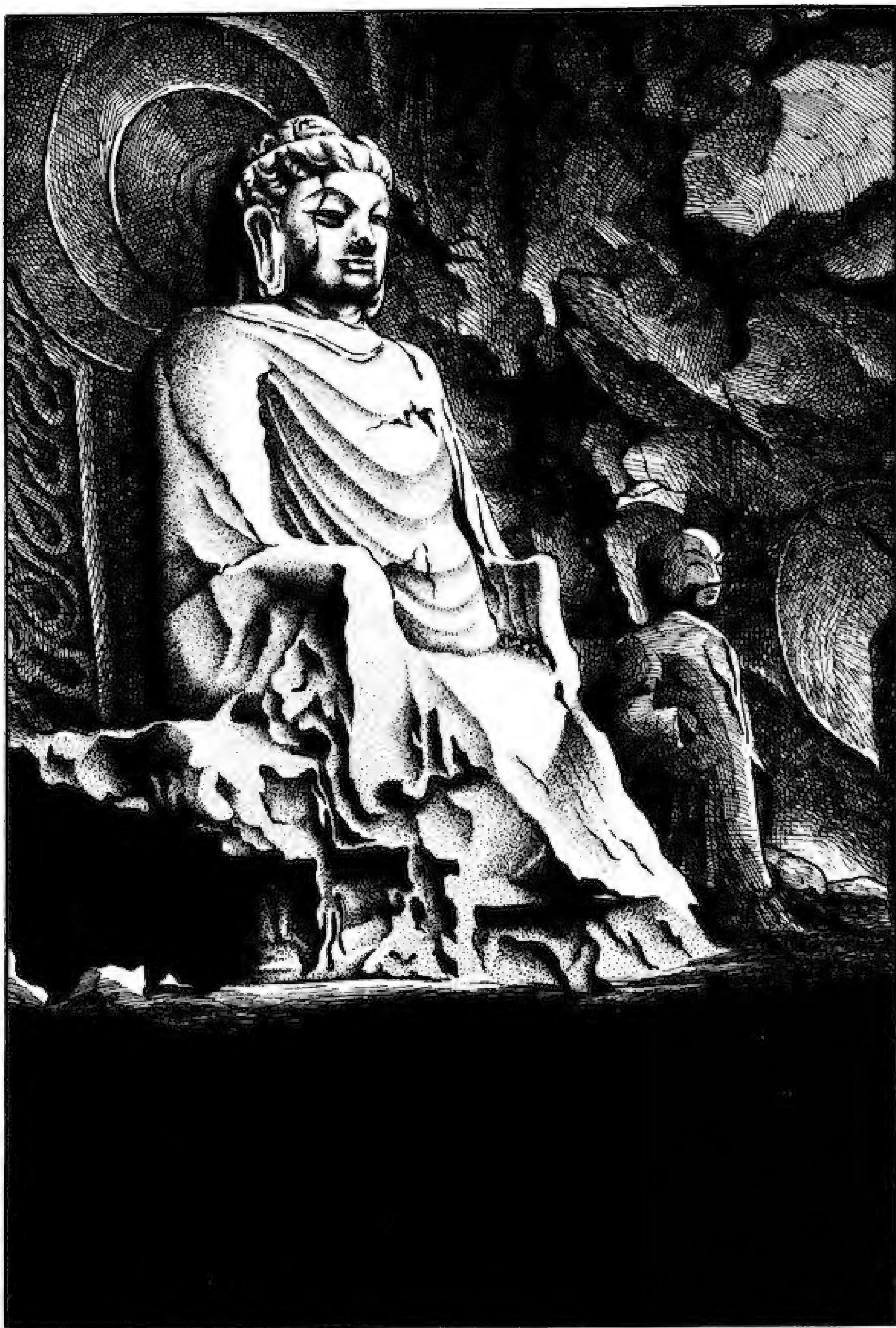




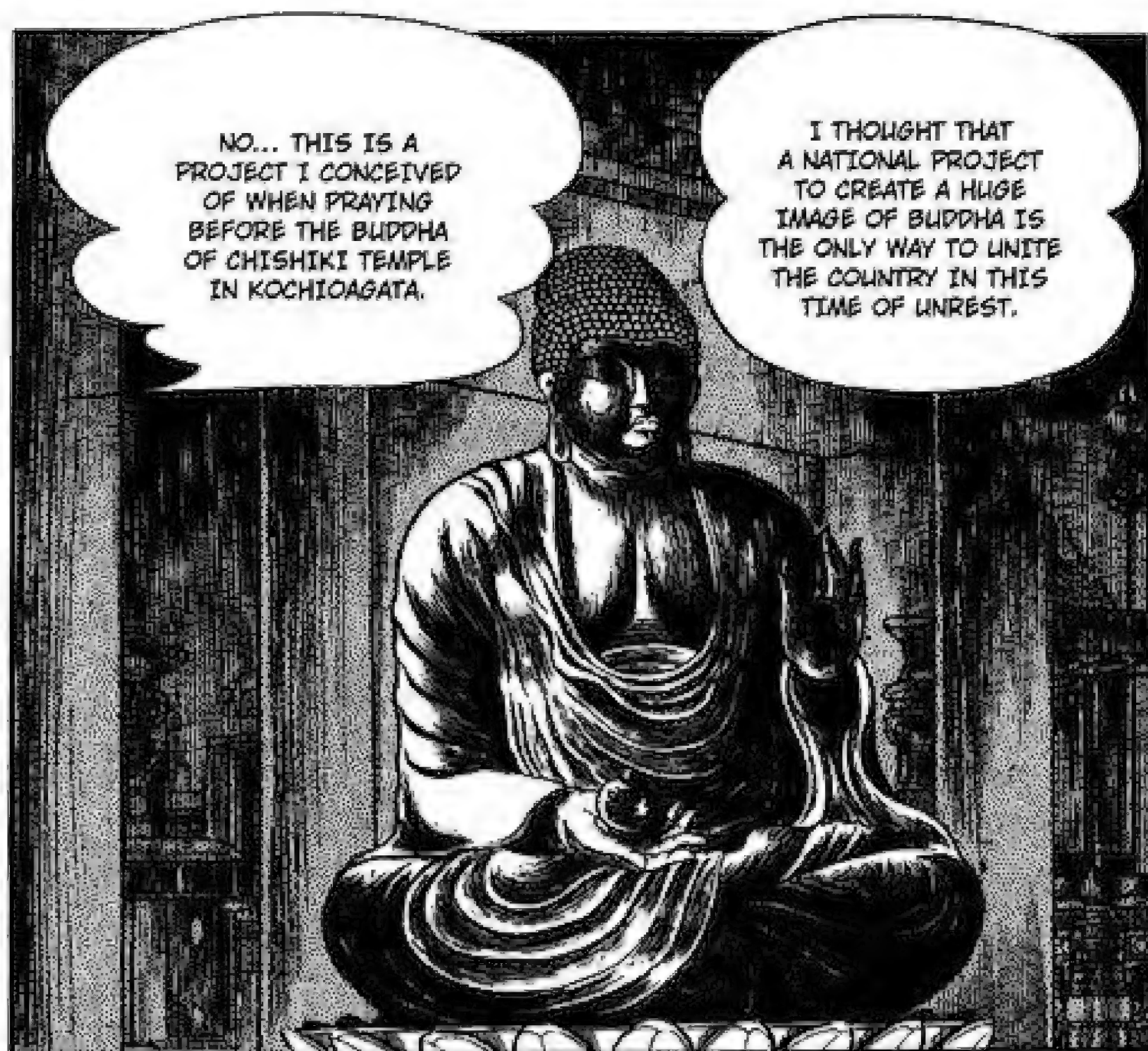












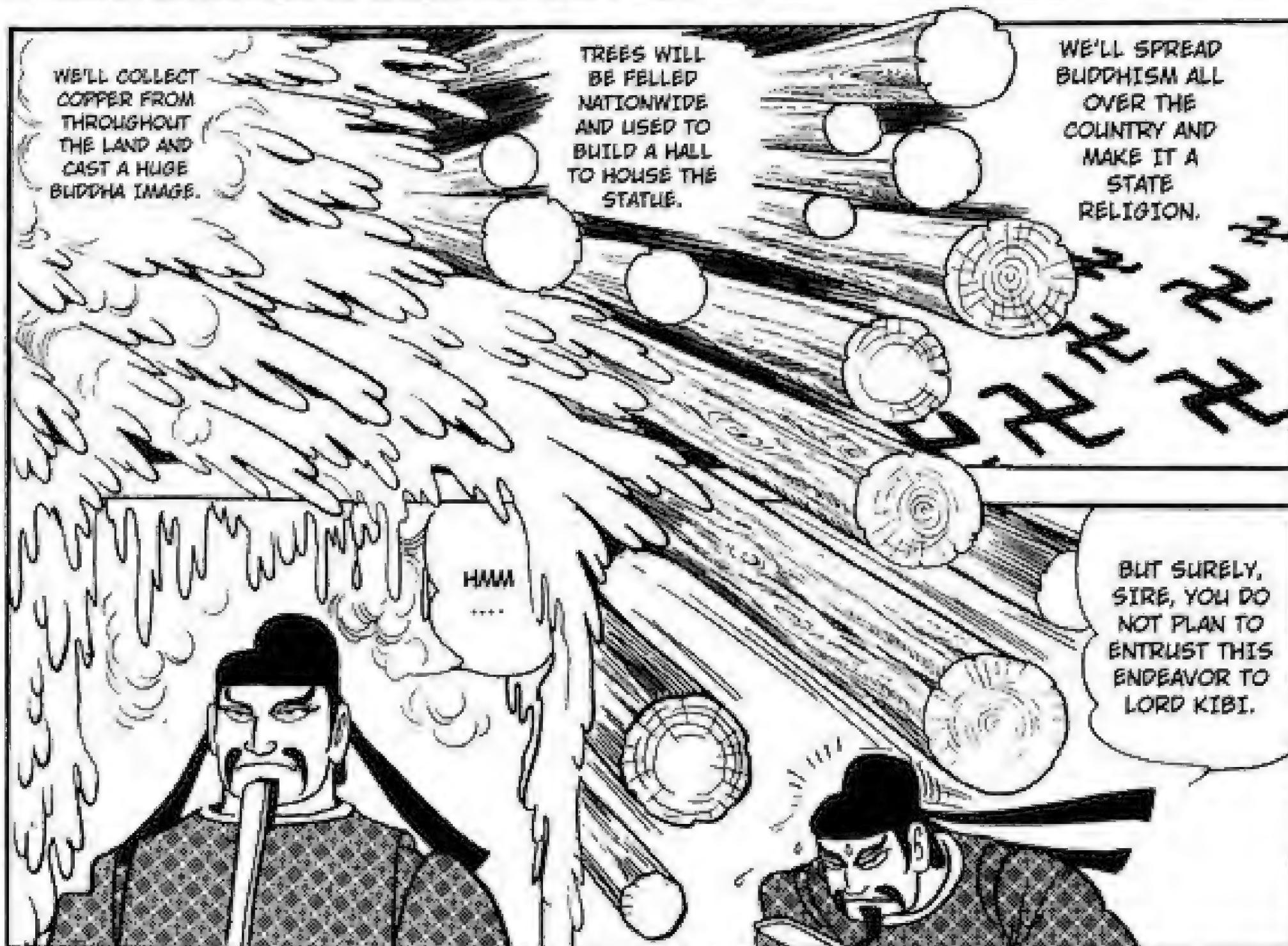
NO... THIS IS A  
PROJECT I CONCEIVED  
OF WHEN PRAYING  
BEFORE THE BUDDHA  
OF CHISHIKI TEMPLE  
IN KOCHIOAGATA.

I THOUGHT THAT  
A NATIONAL PROJECT  
TO CREATE A HUGE  
IMAGE OF BUDDHA IS  
THE ONLY WAY TO UNITE  
THE COUNTRY IN THIS  
TIME OF UNREST.



HMMMM

....



WE'LL COLLECT  
COPPER FROM  
THROUGHOUT  
THE LAND AND  
CAST A HUGE  
BUDDHA IMAGE.

TREES WILL  
BE FELLED  
NATIONWIDE  
AND USED TO  
BUILD A HALL  
TO HOUSE THE  
STATUE.

WE'LL SPREAD  
BUDDHISM ALL  
OVER THE  
COUNTRY AND  
MAKE IT A  
STATE  
RELIGION.

HMM

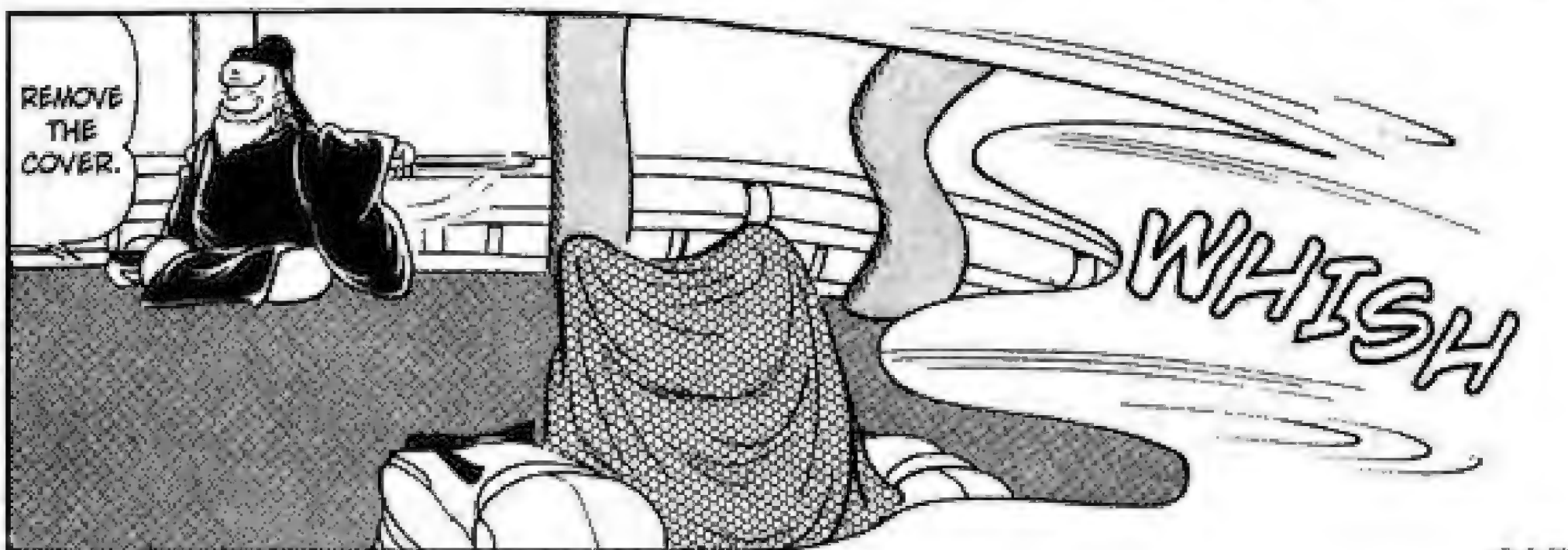
....

BUT SURELY,  
SIRE, YOU DO  
NOT PLAN TO  
ENTRUST THIS  
ENDEAVOR TO  
LORD KIBI.

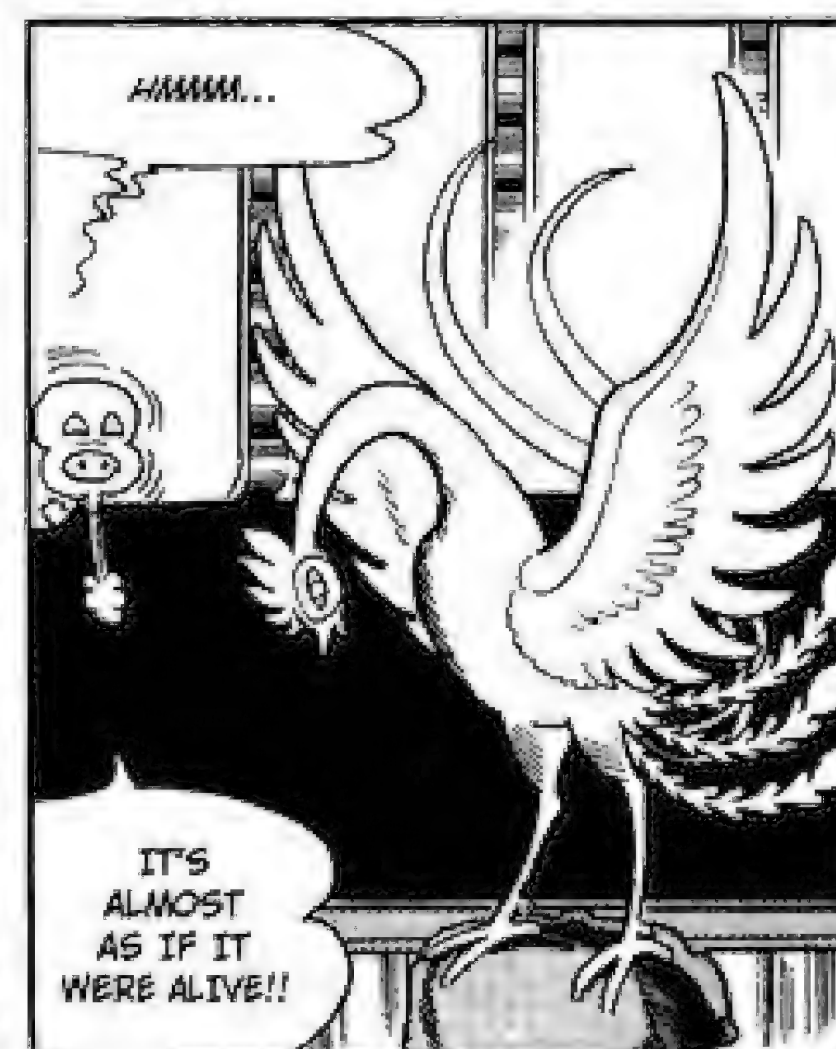
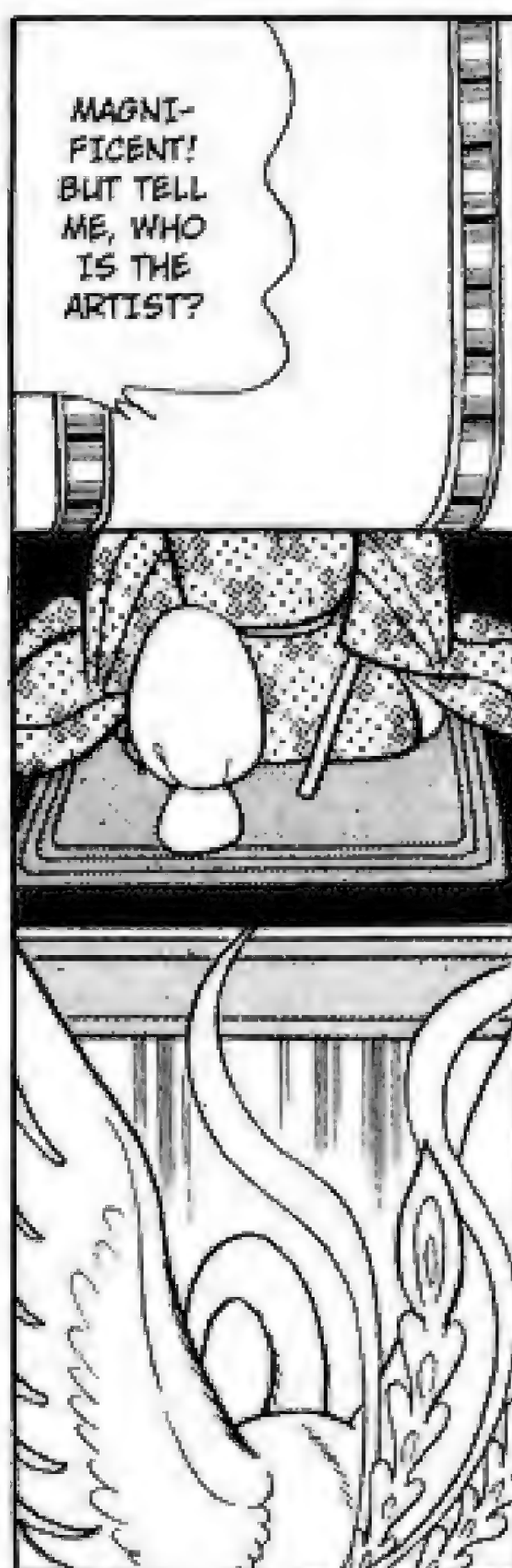
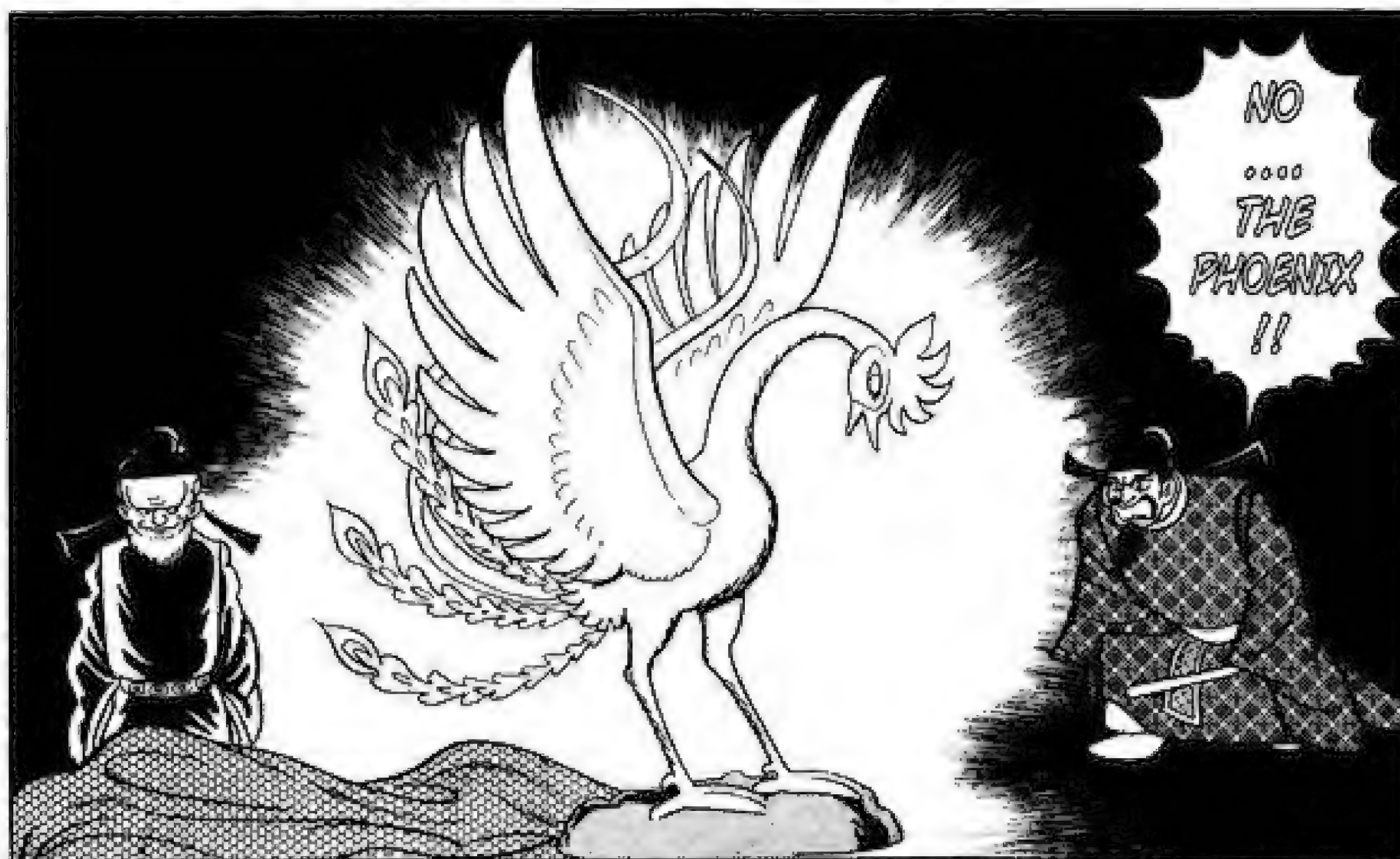




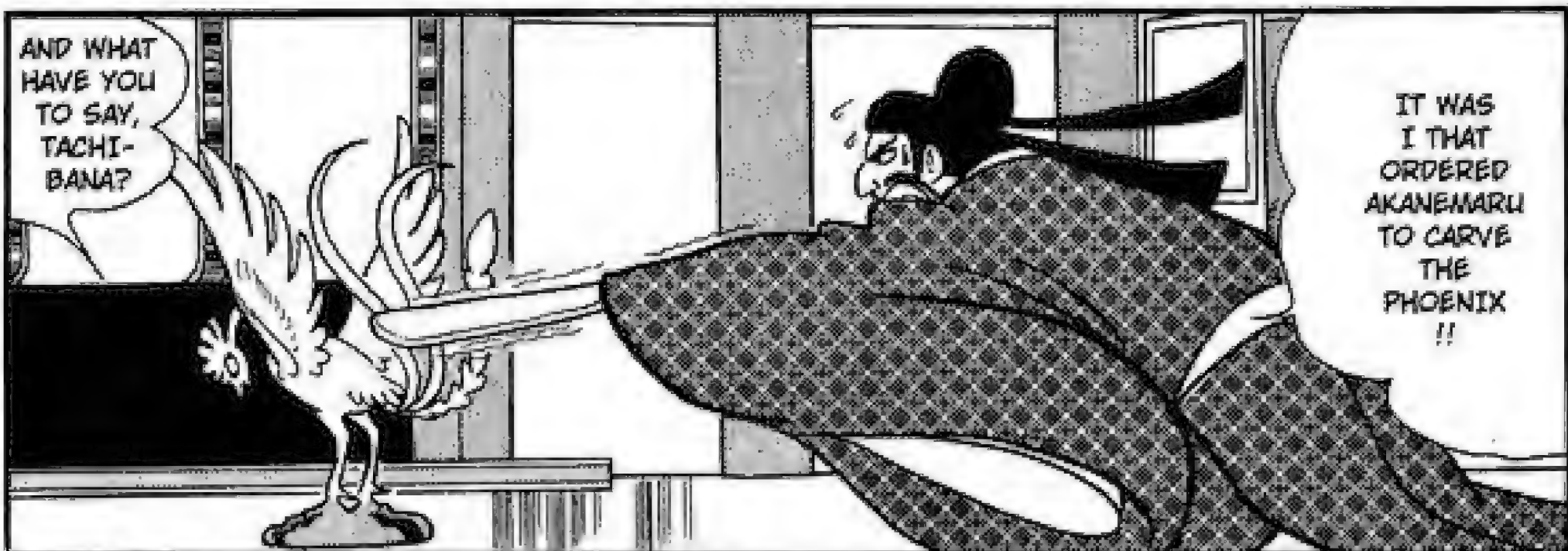
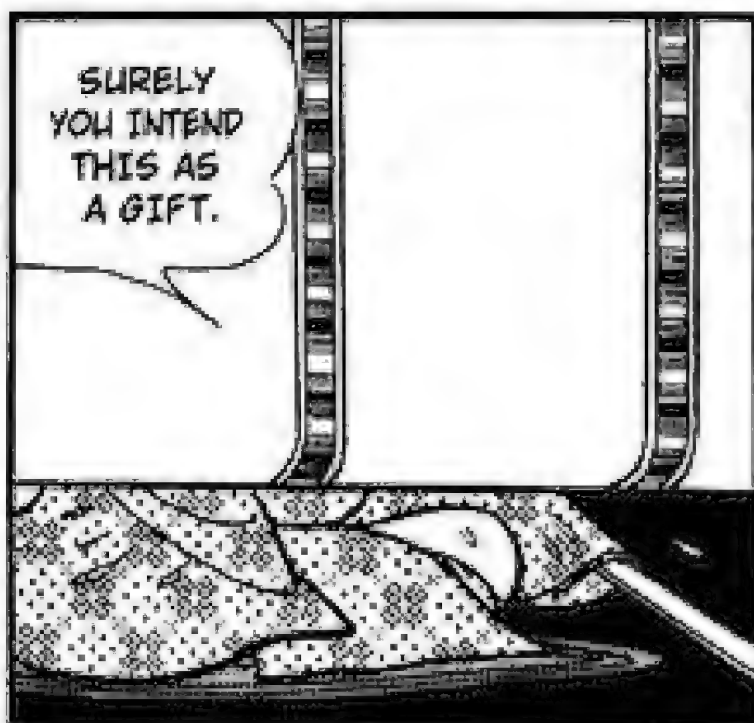








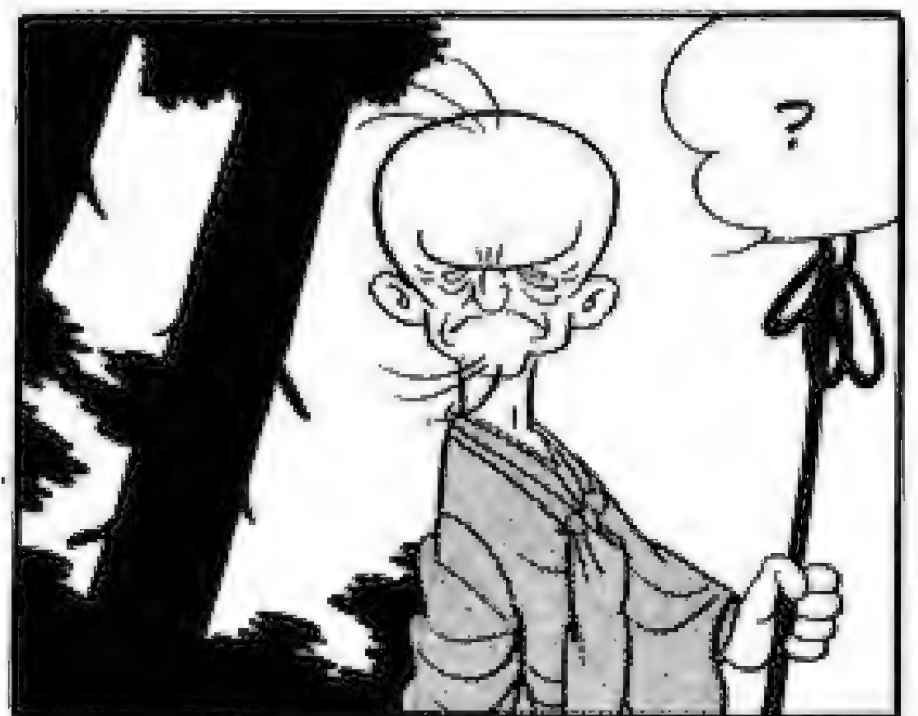
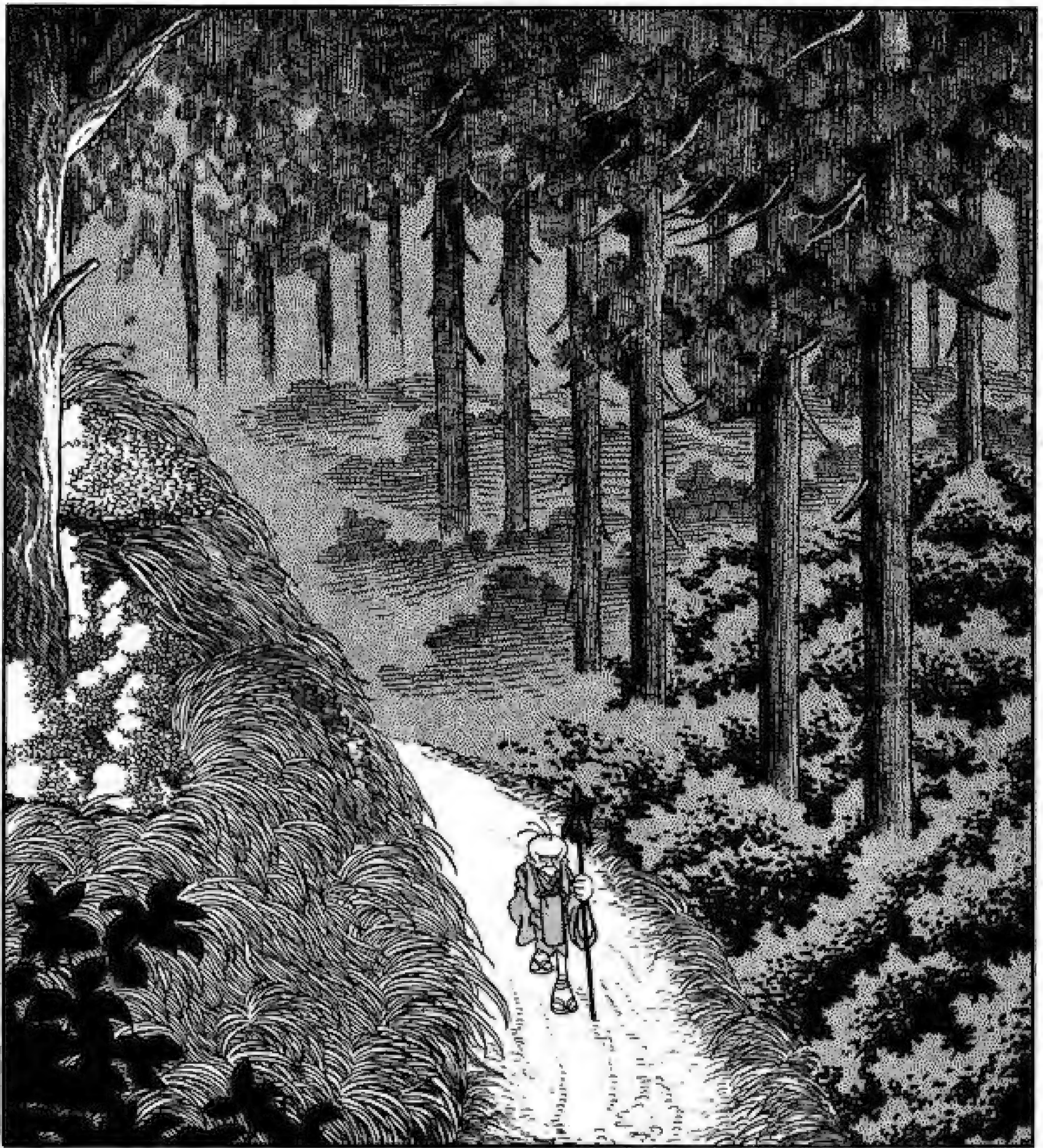




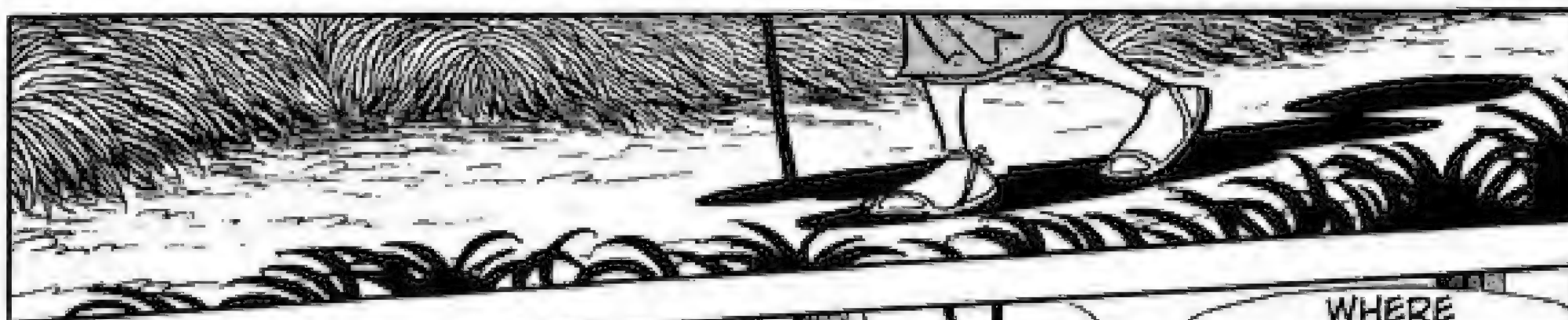




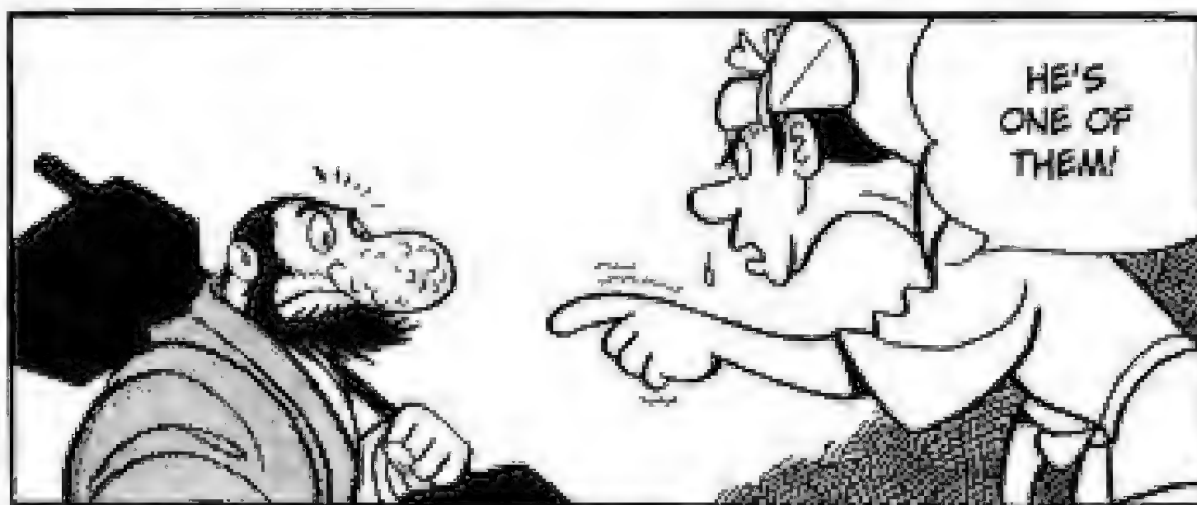
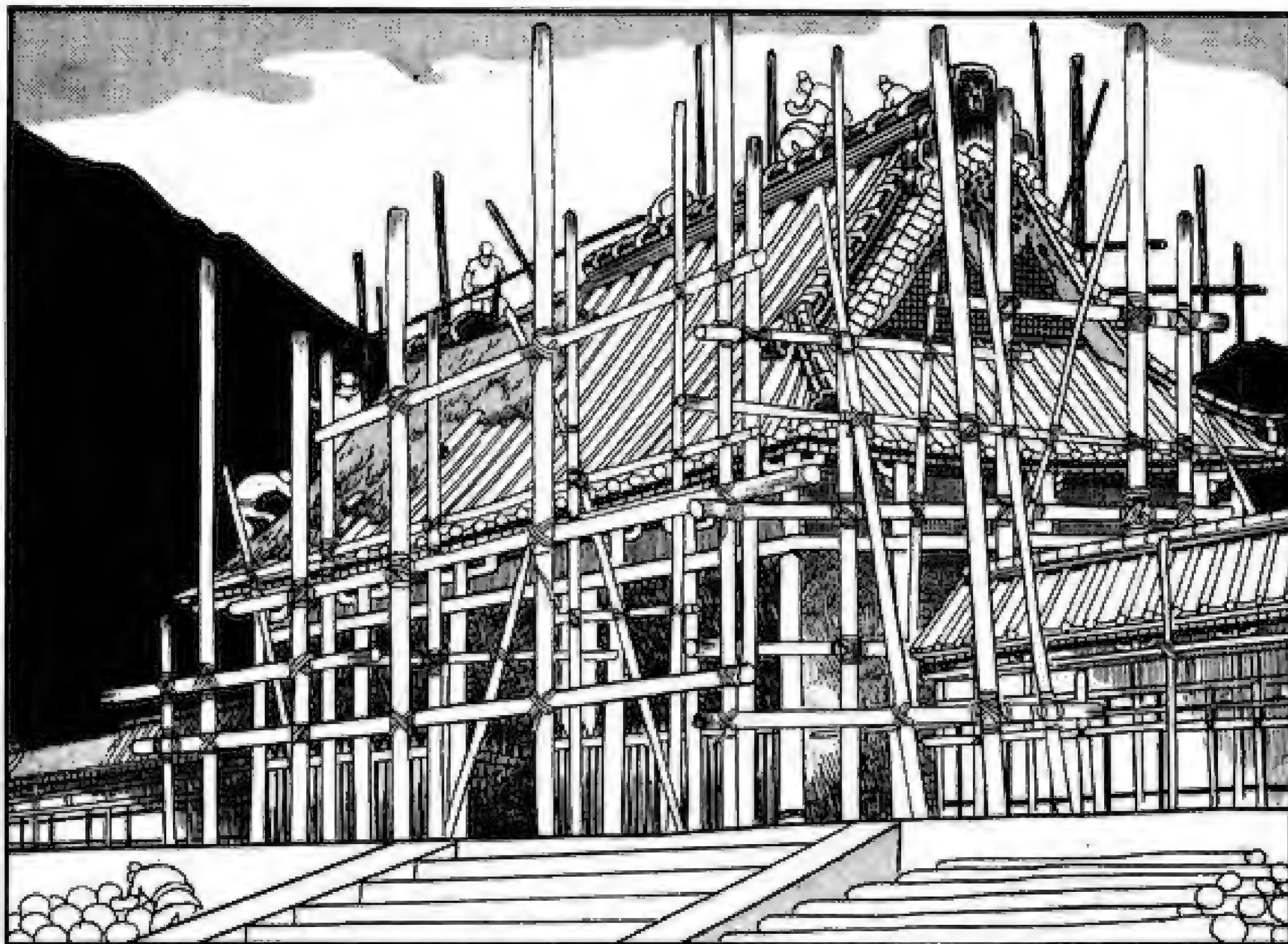




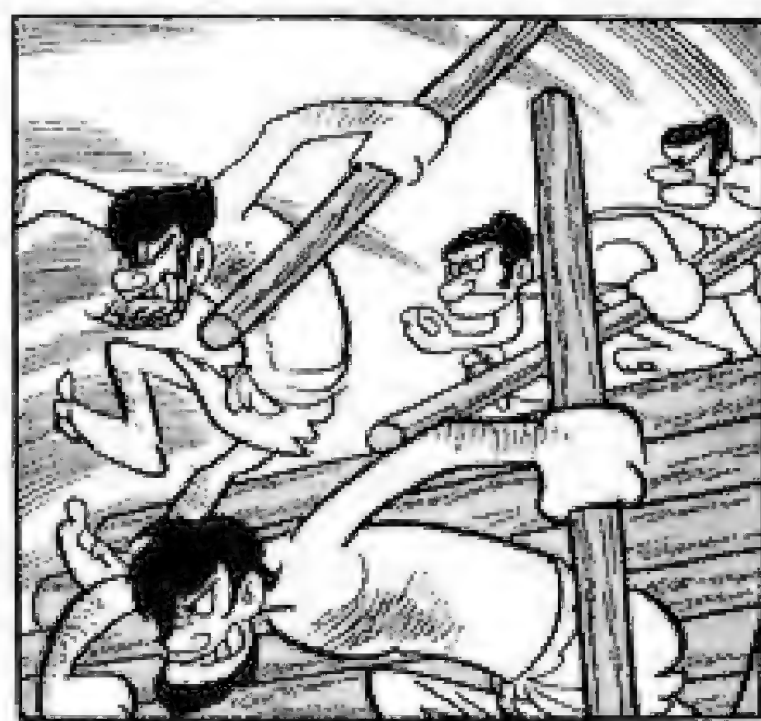
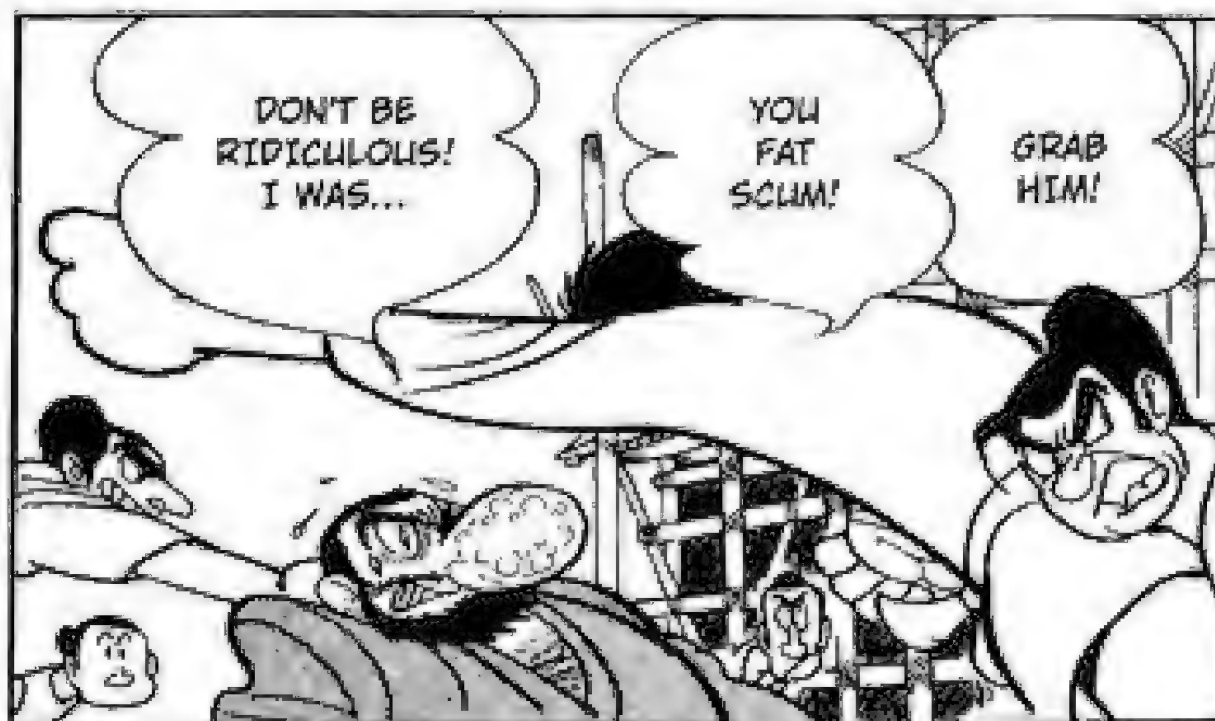




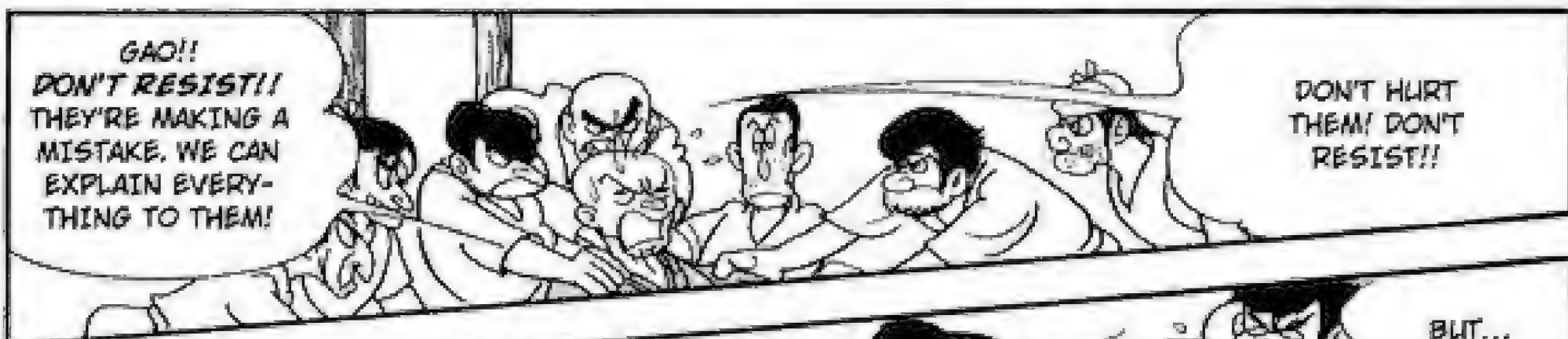




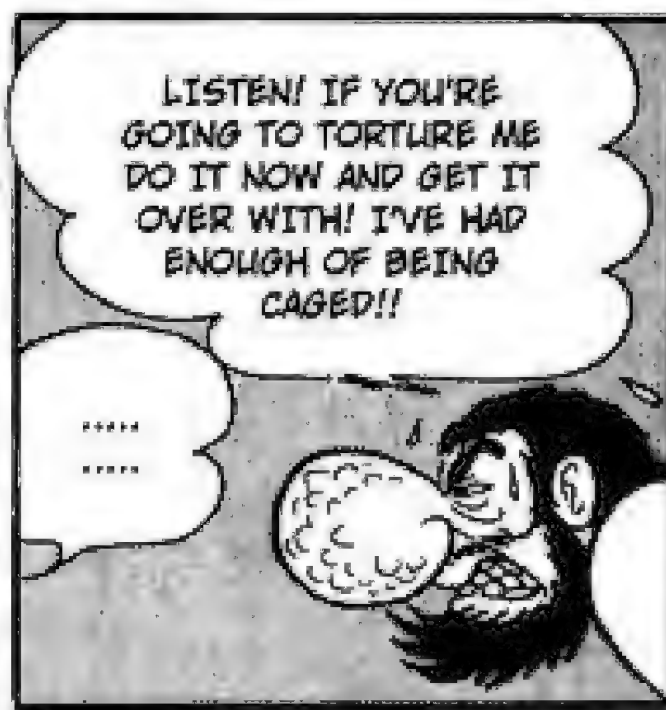
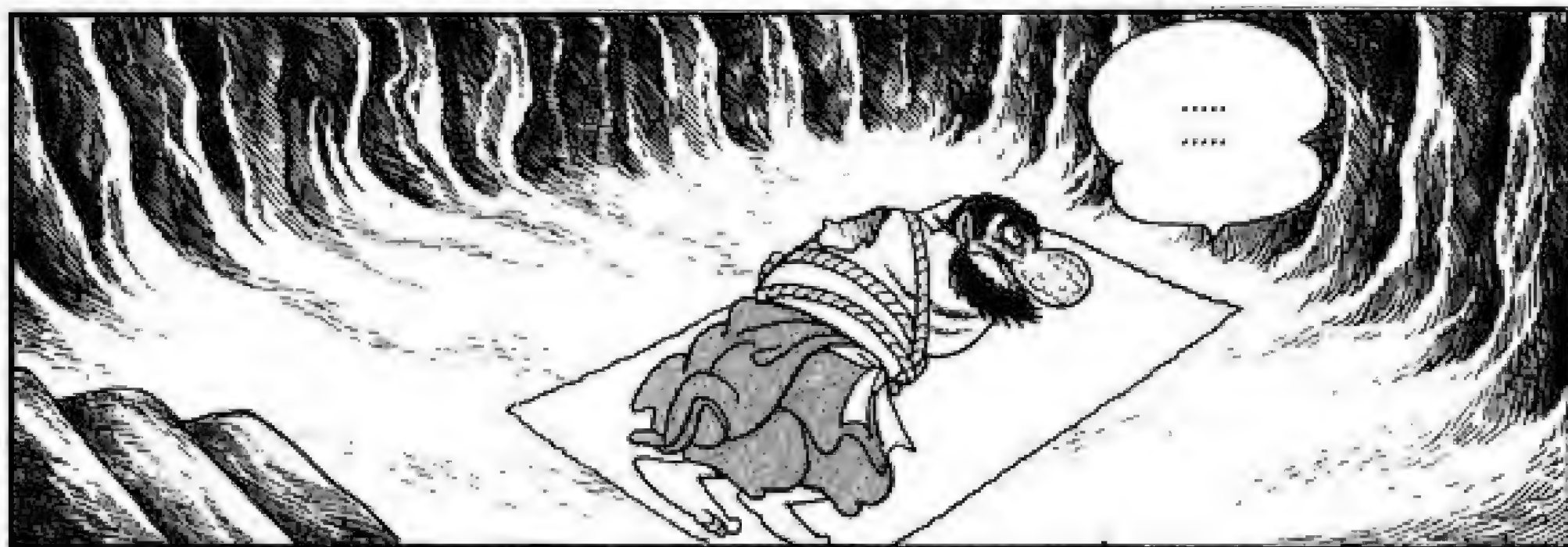
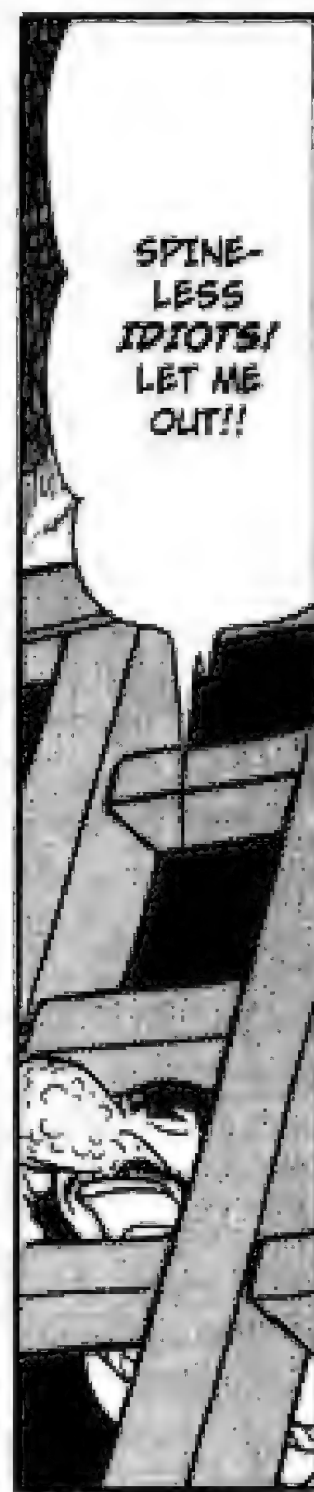
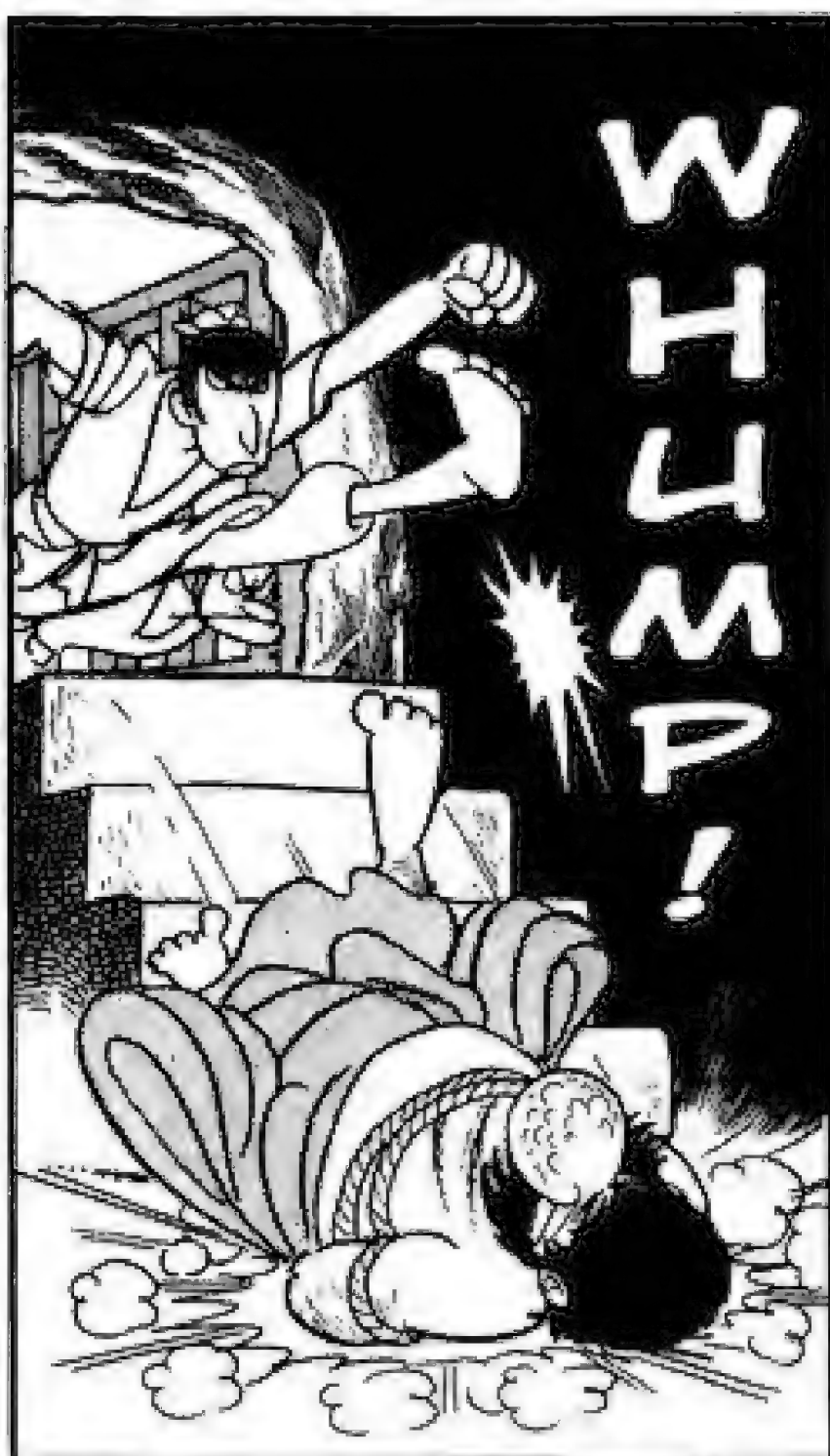








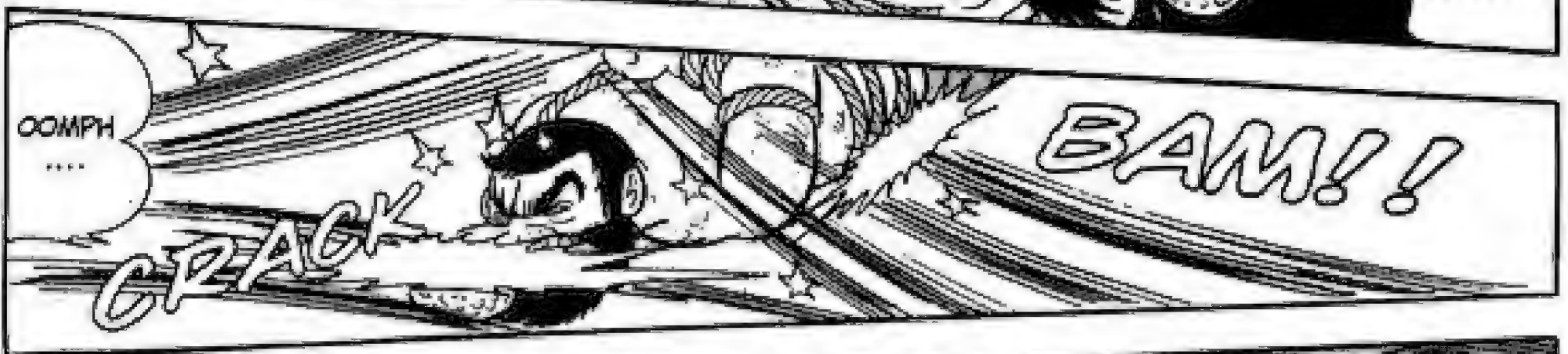
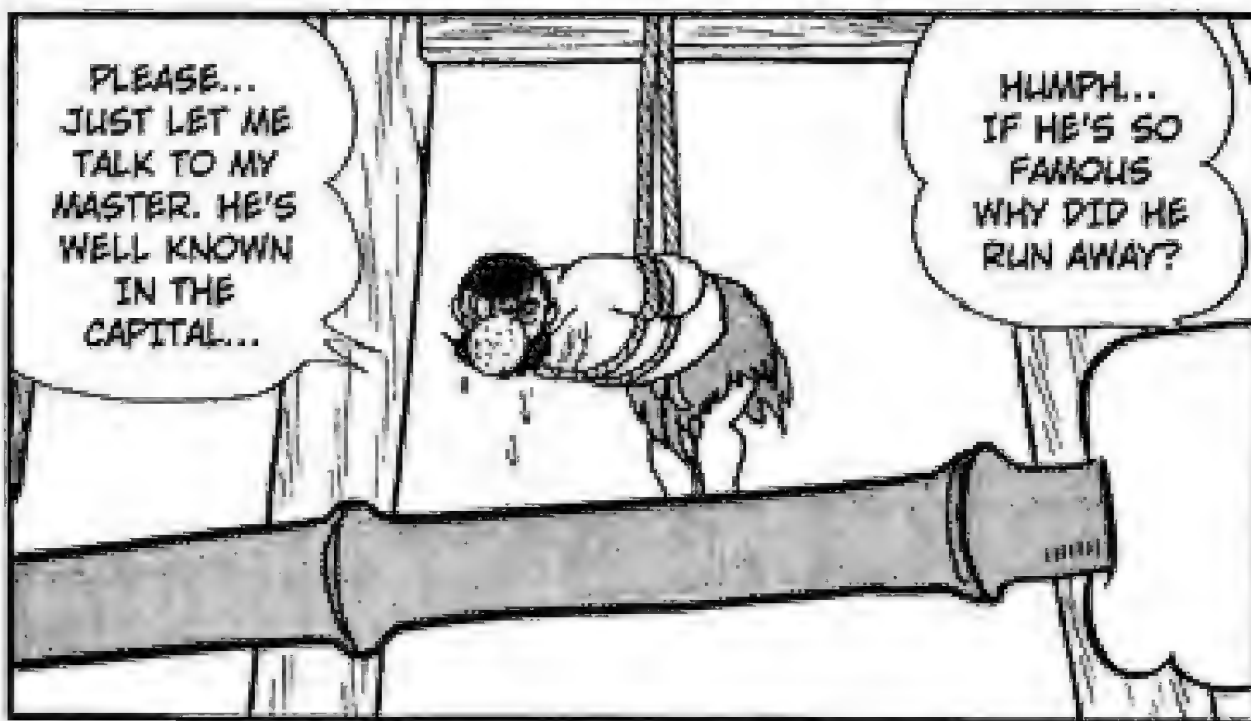




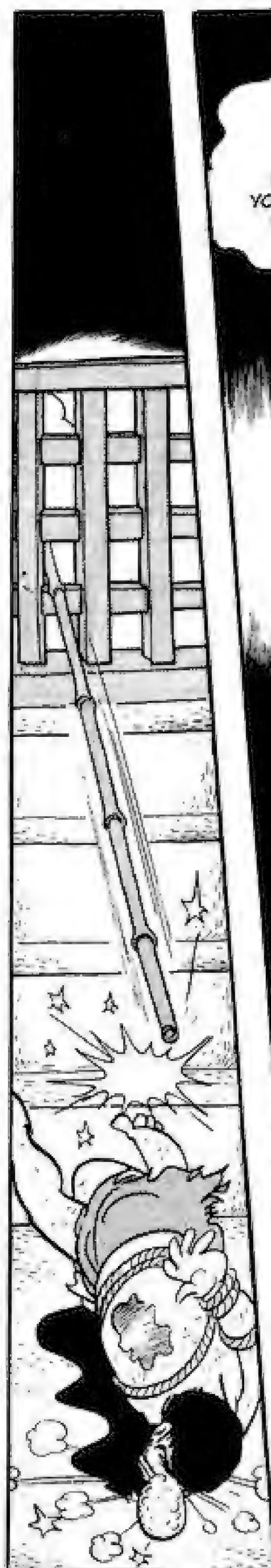
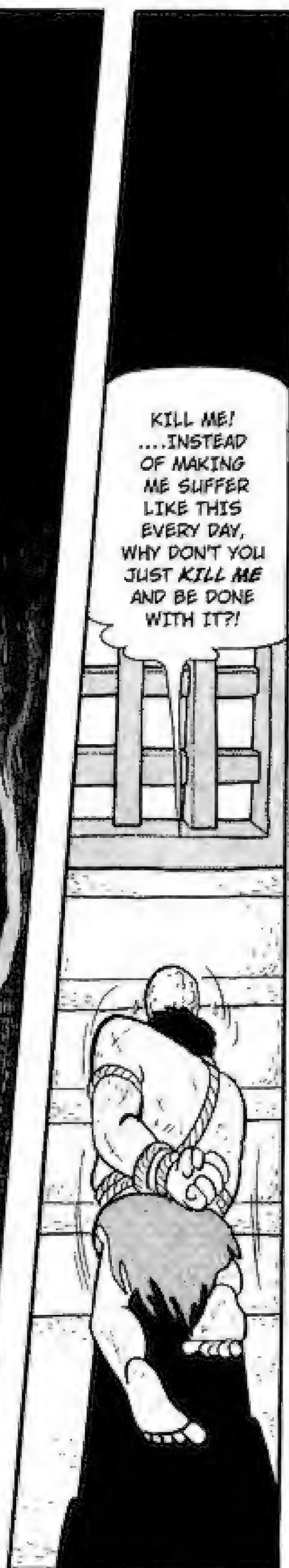




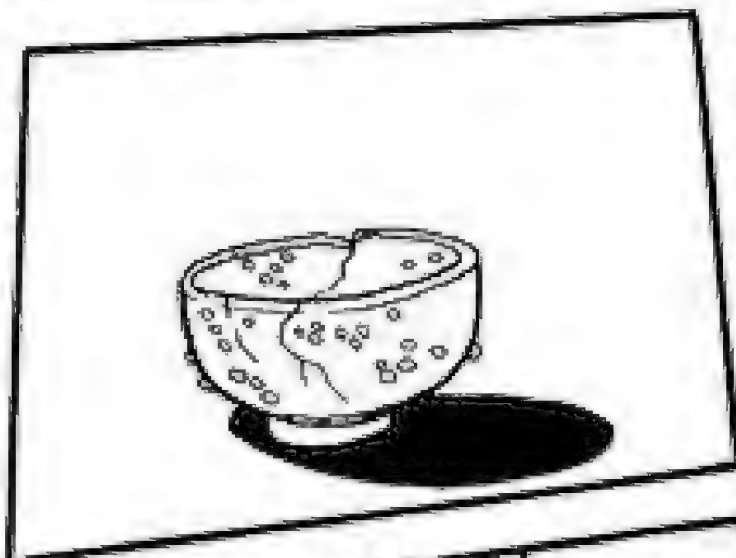
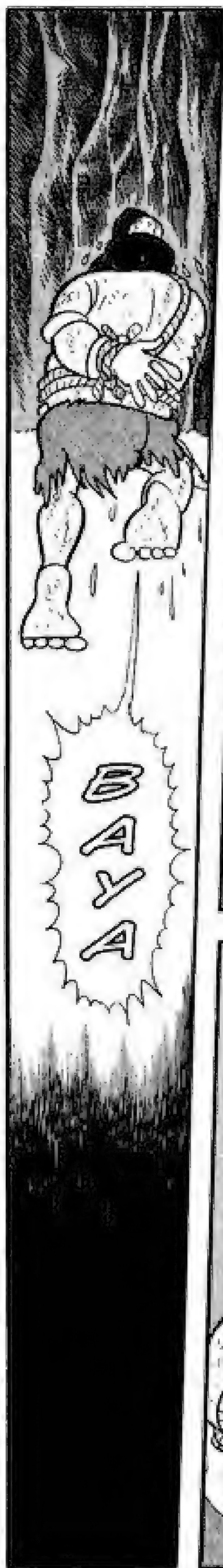




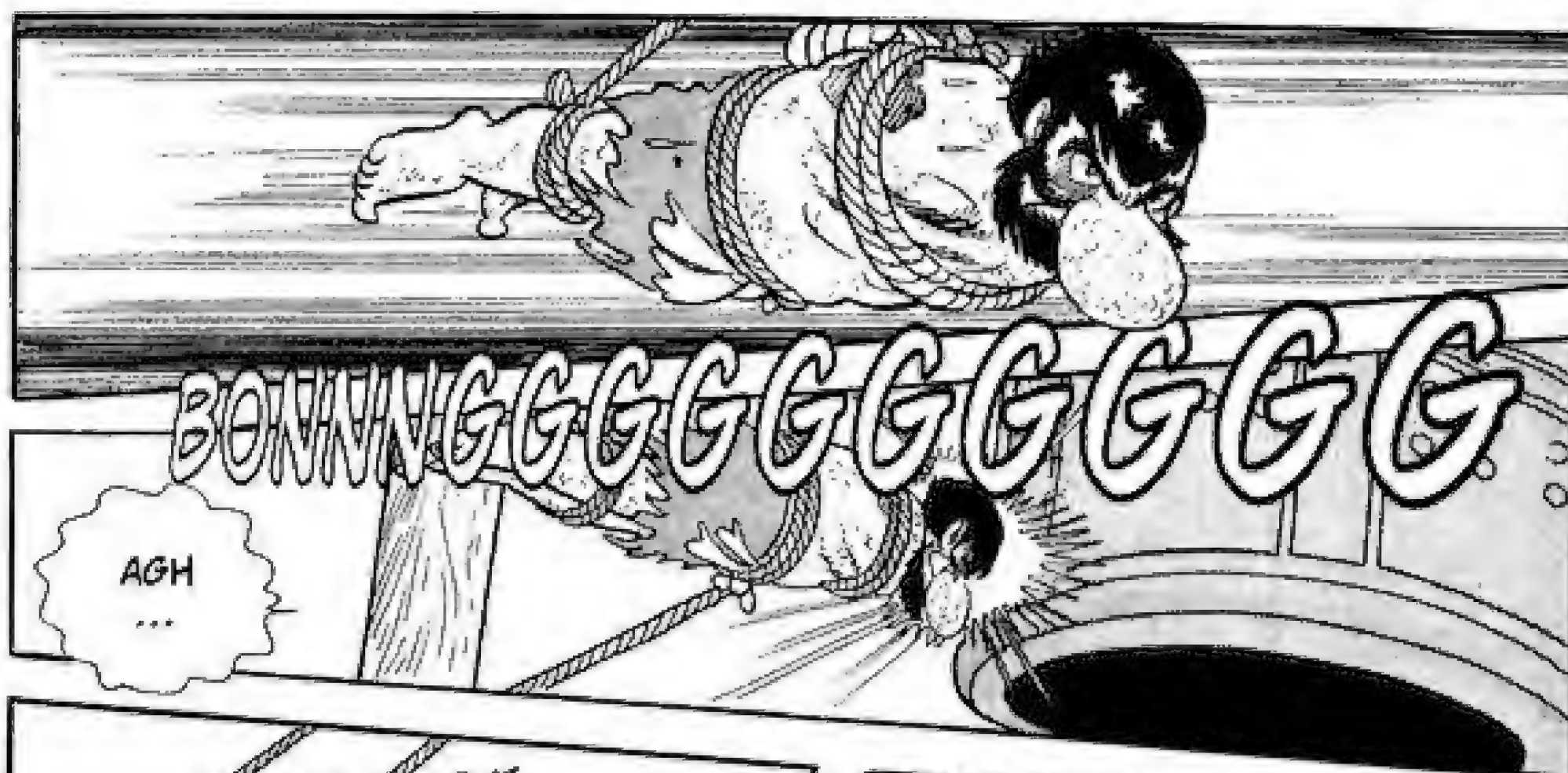








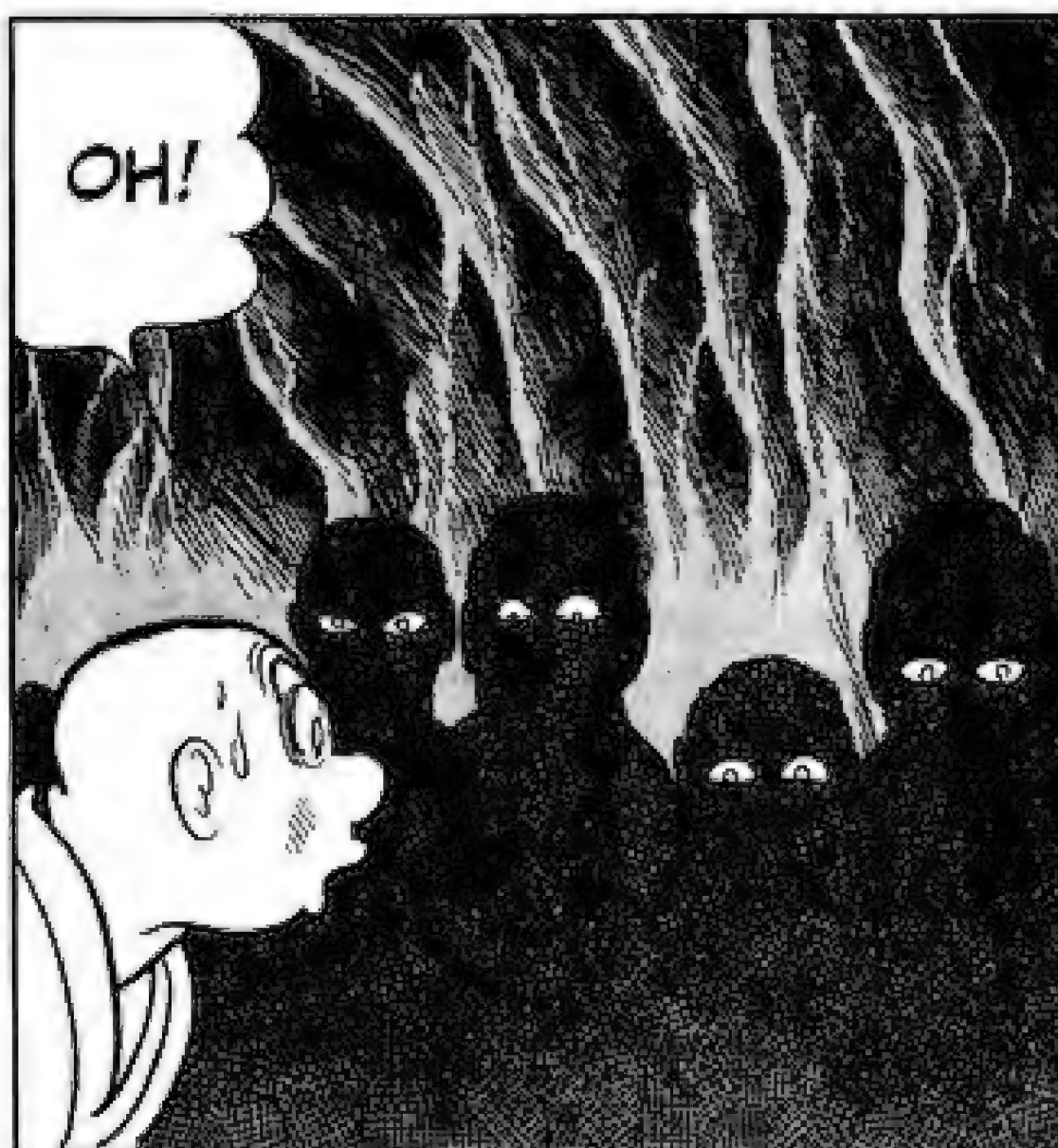




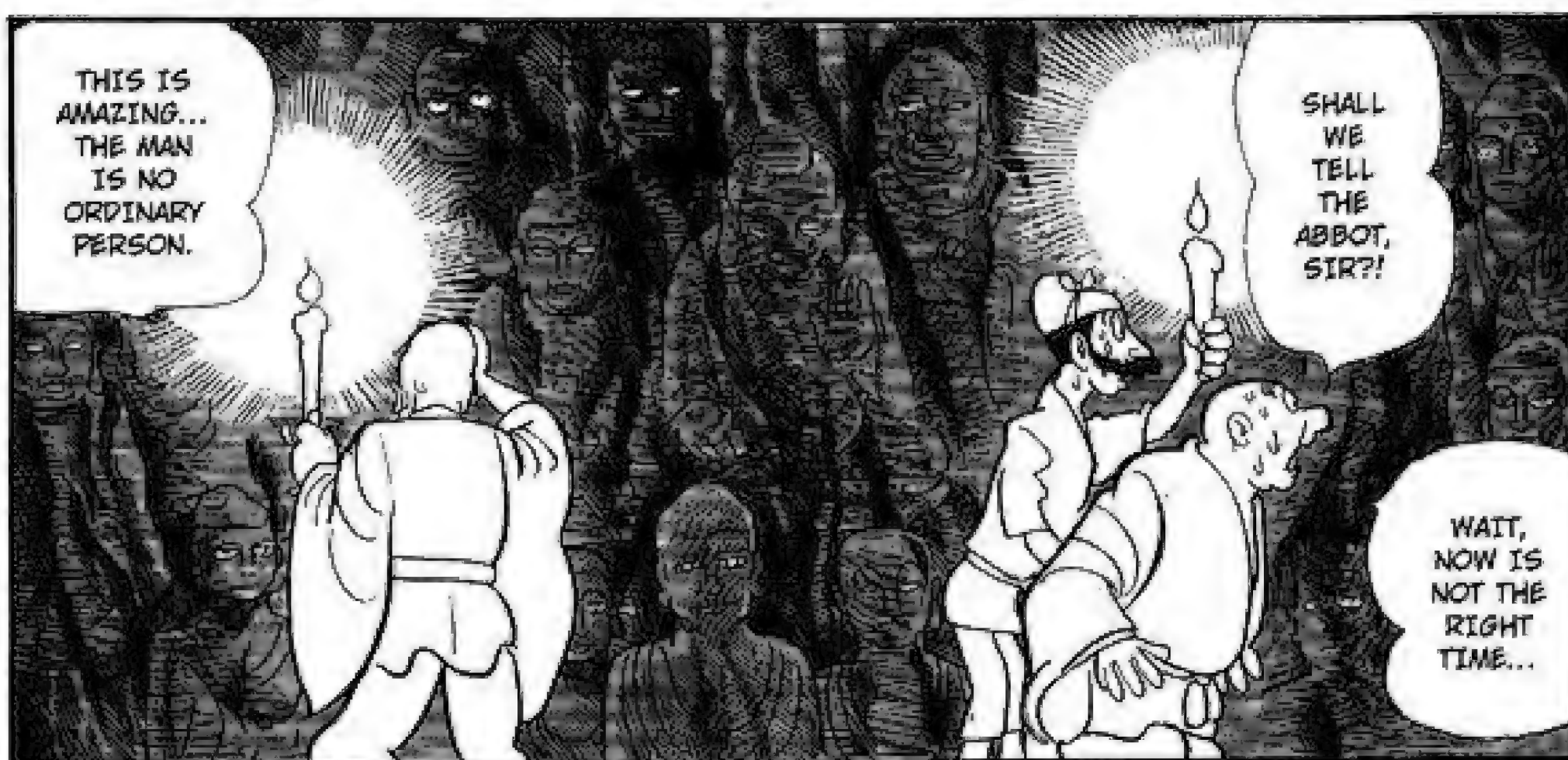
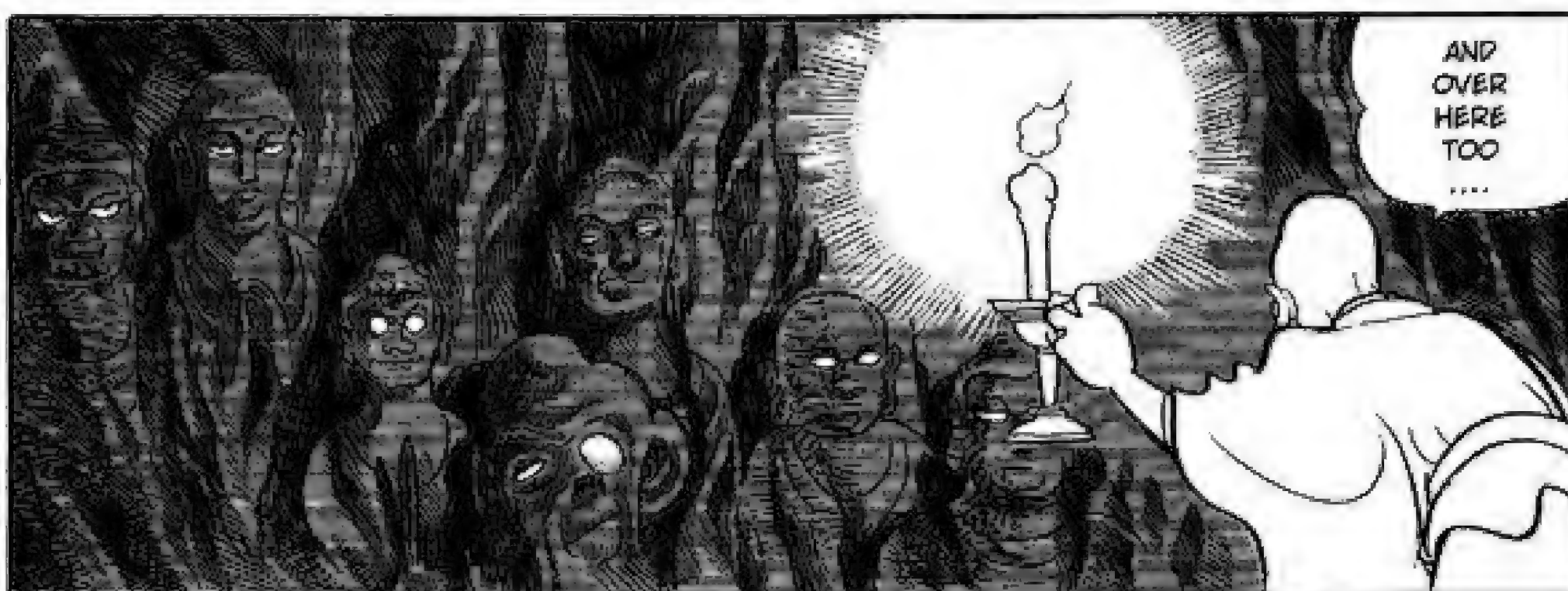
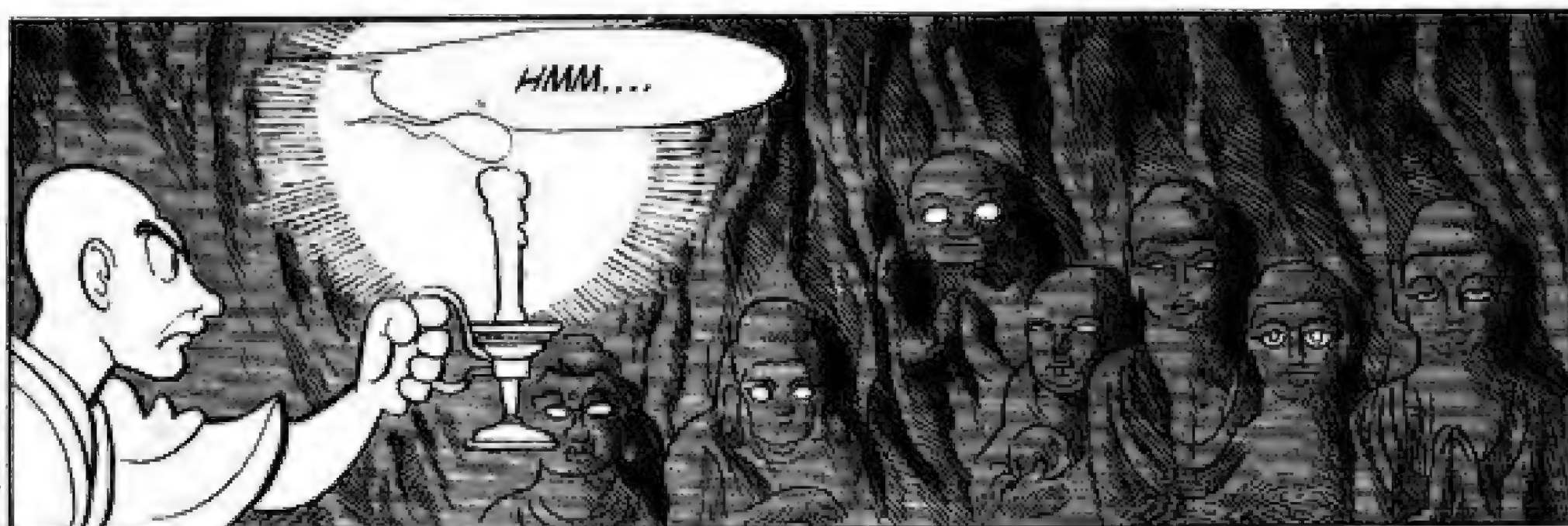
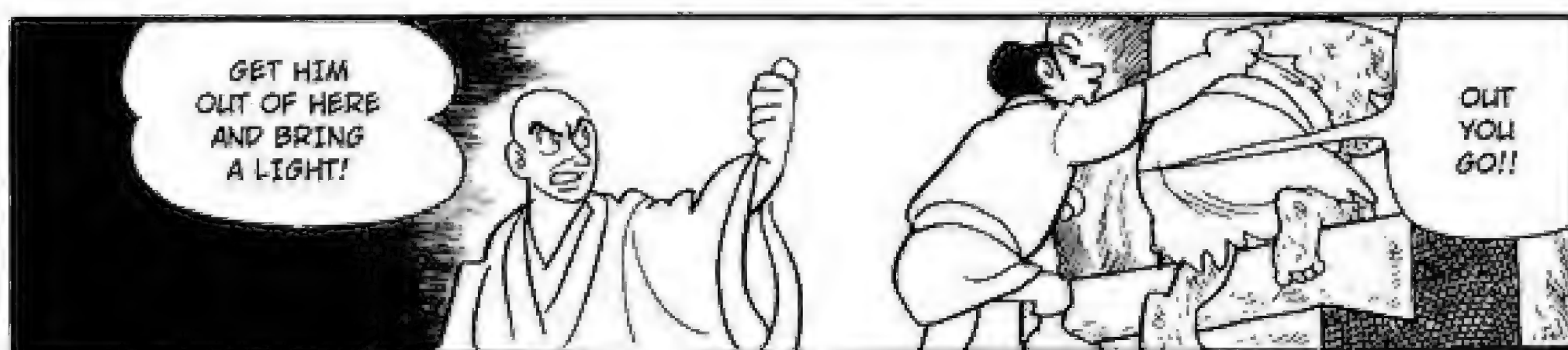




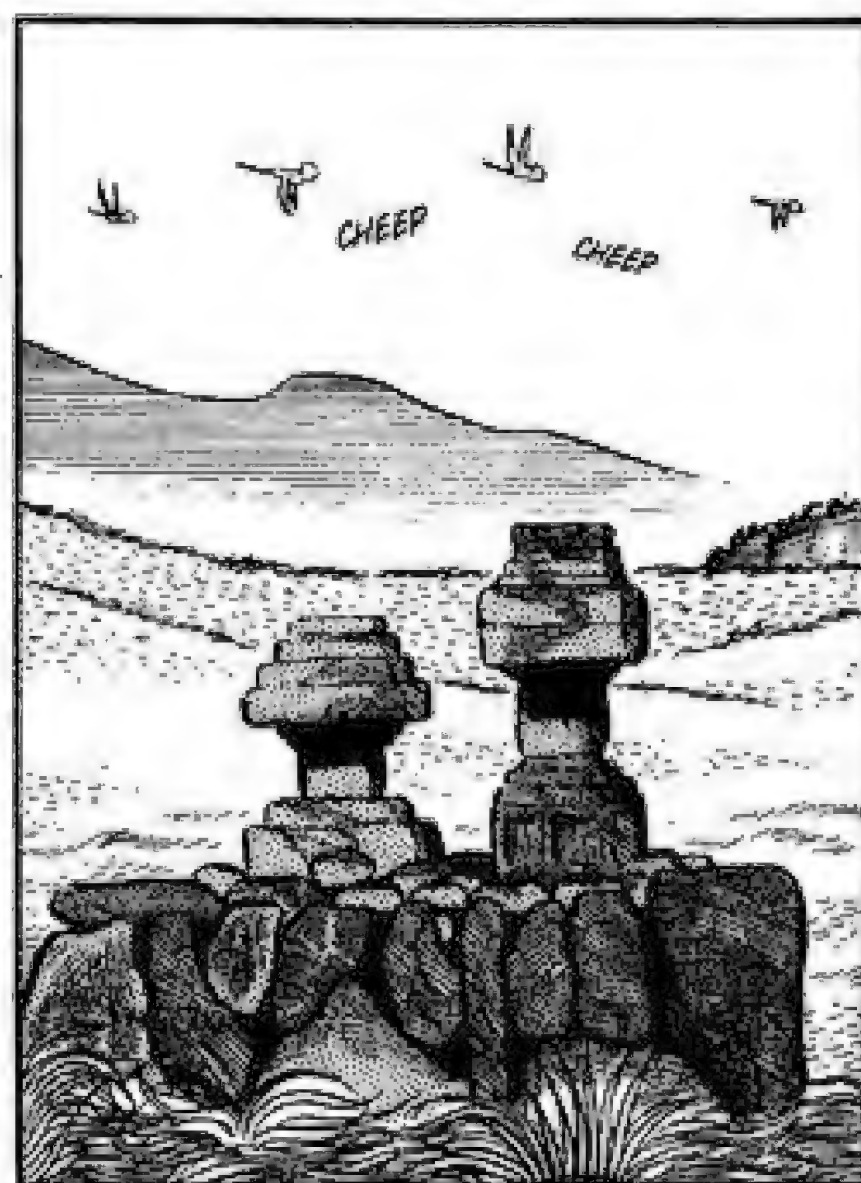
















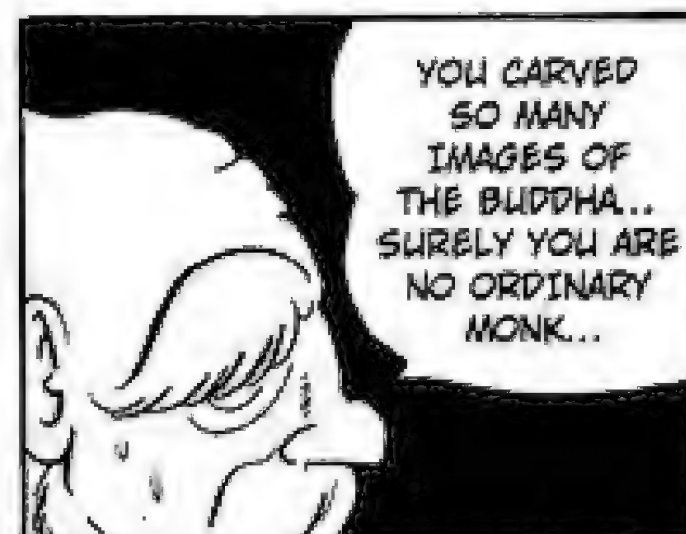




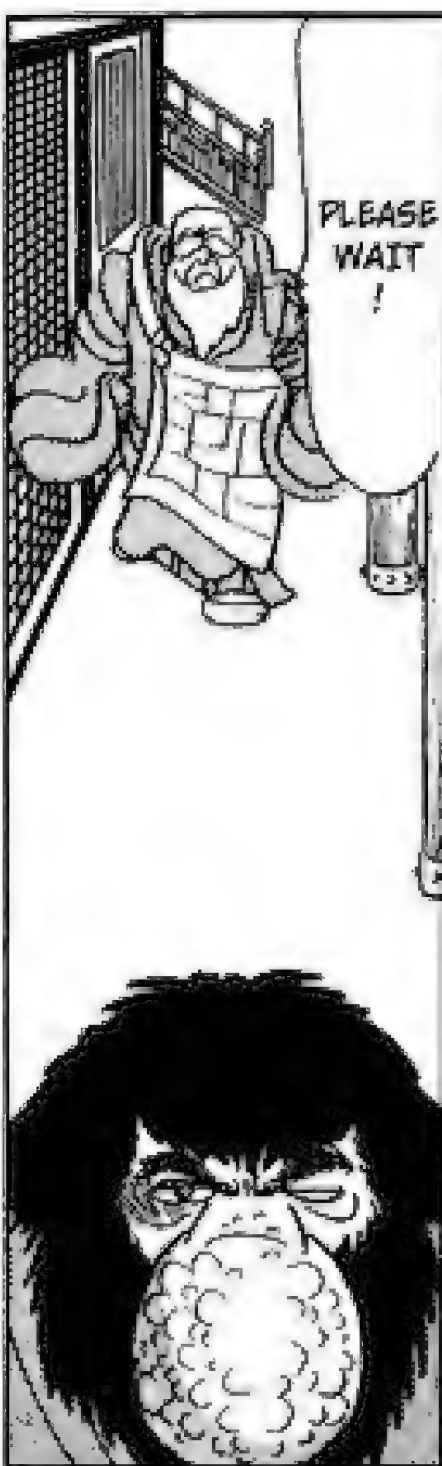
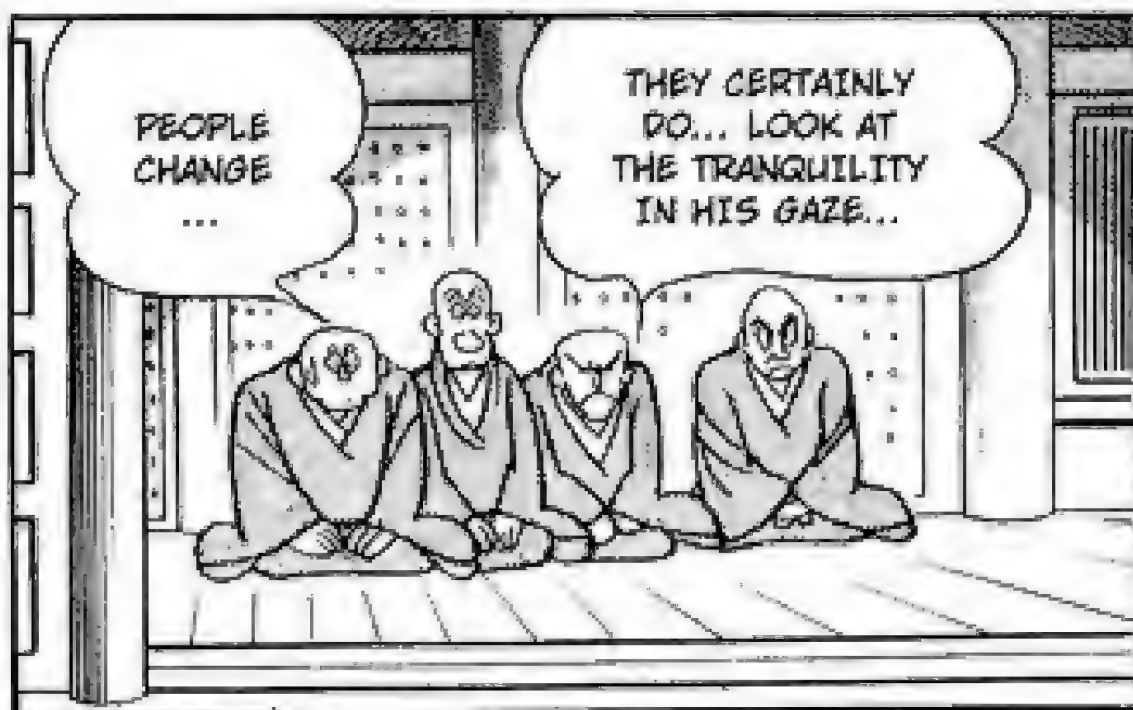




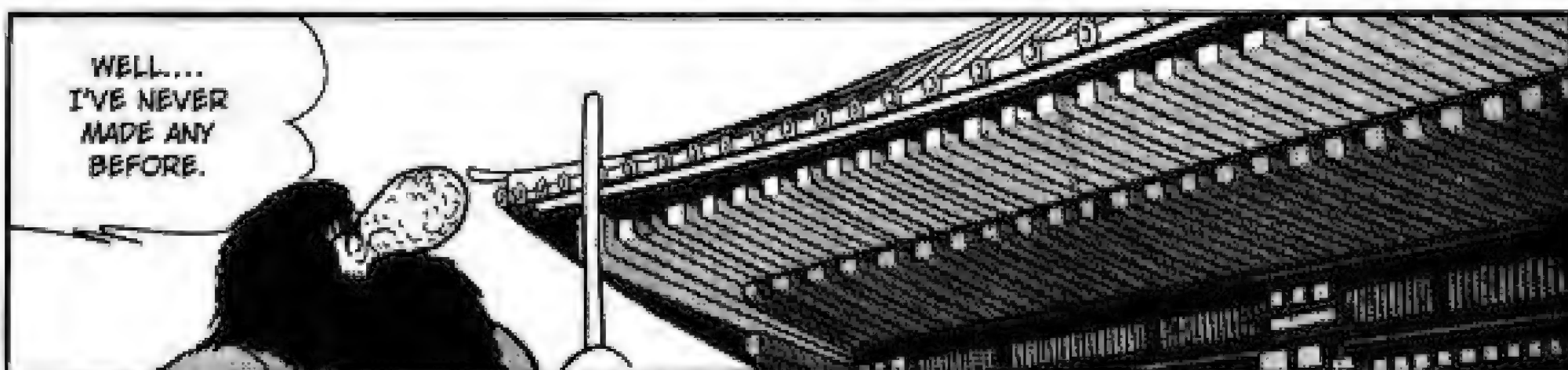
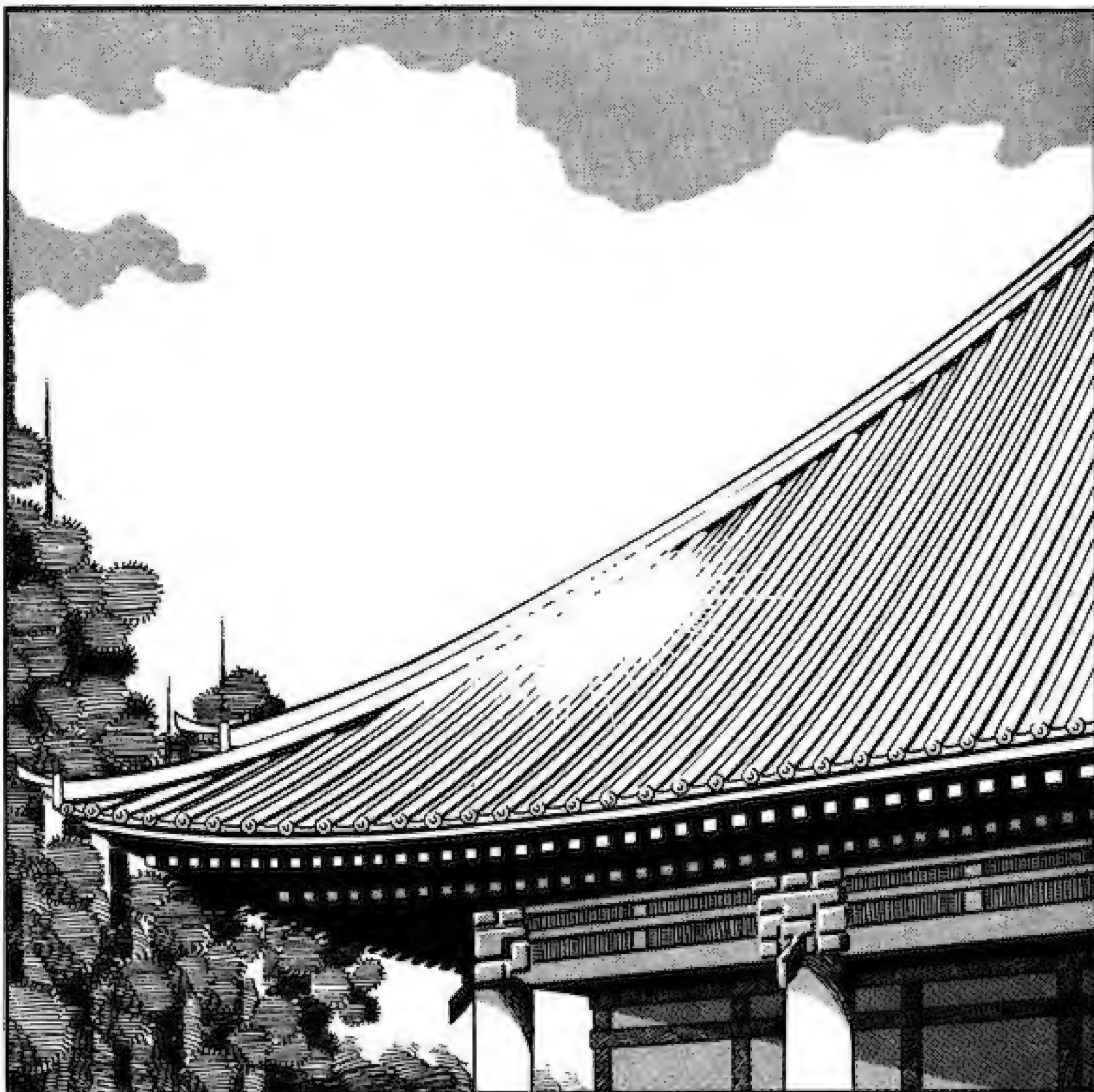




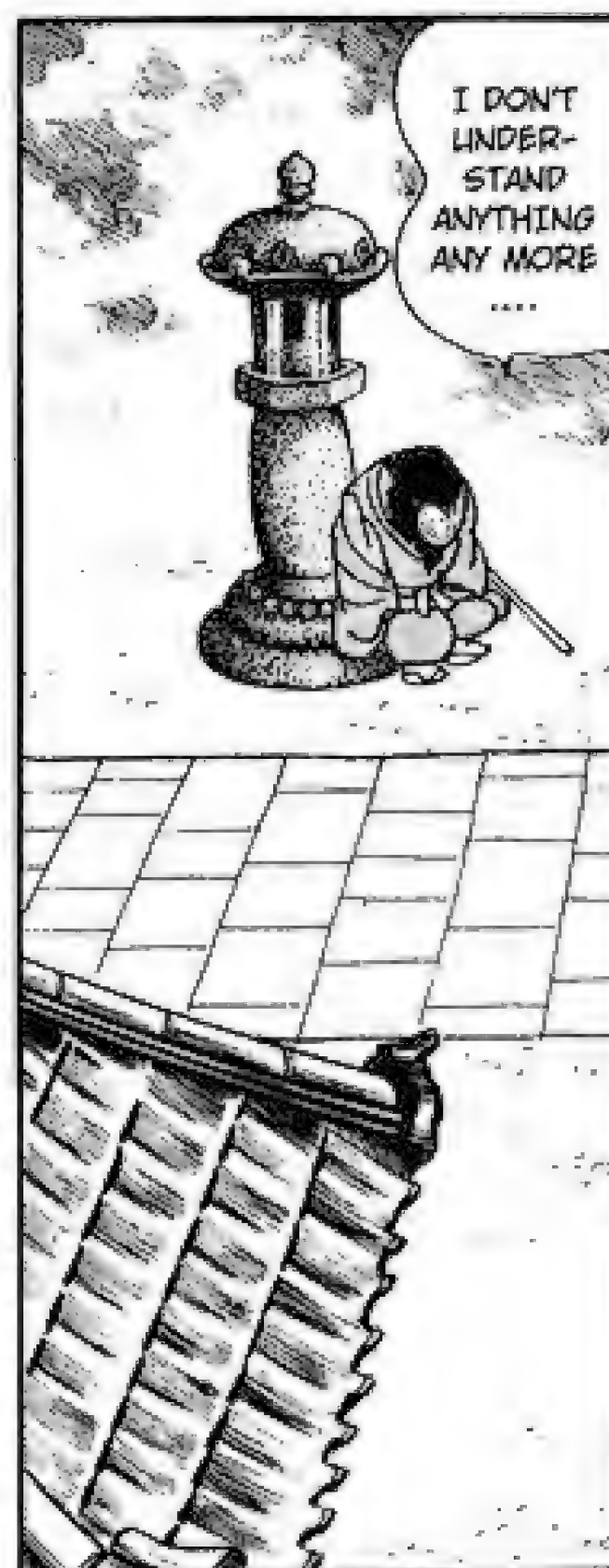








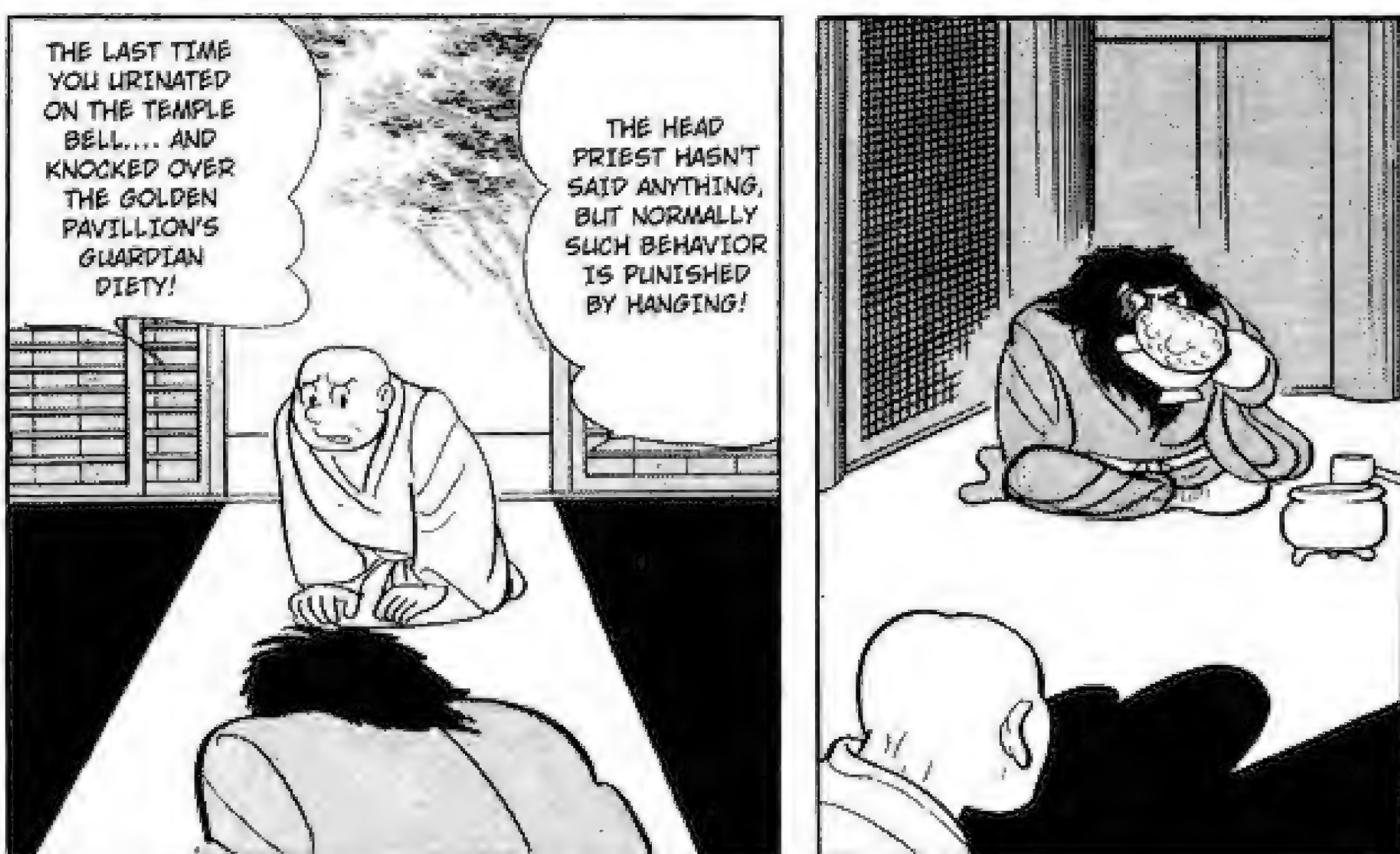
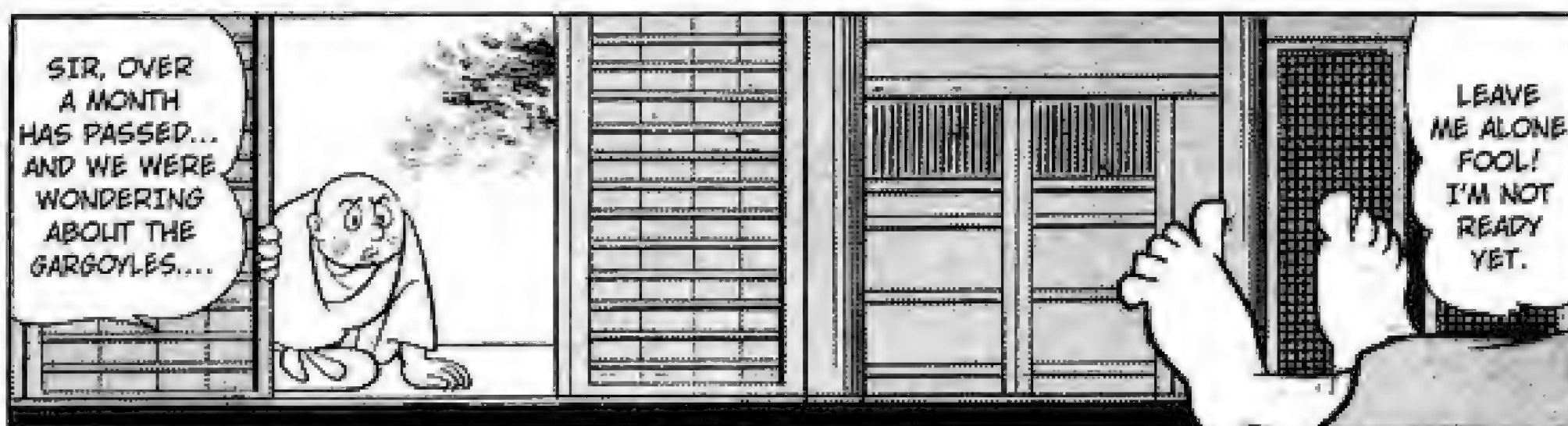




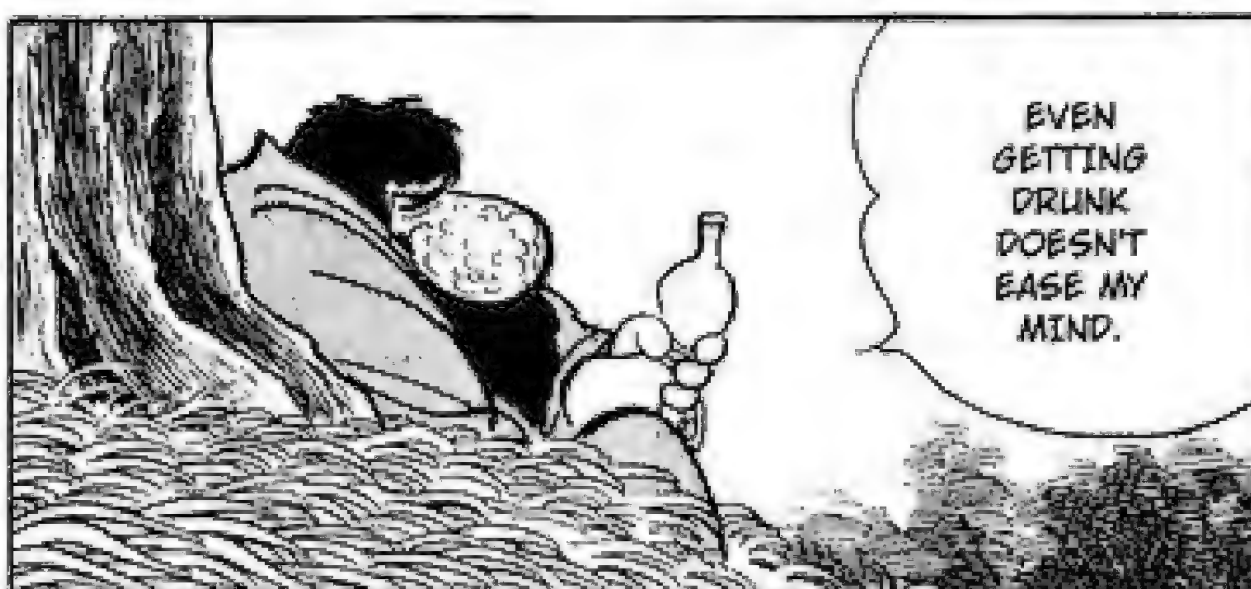
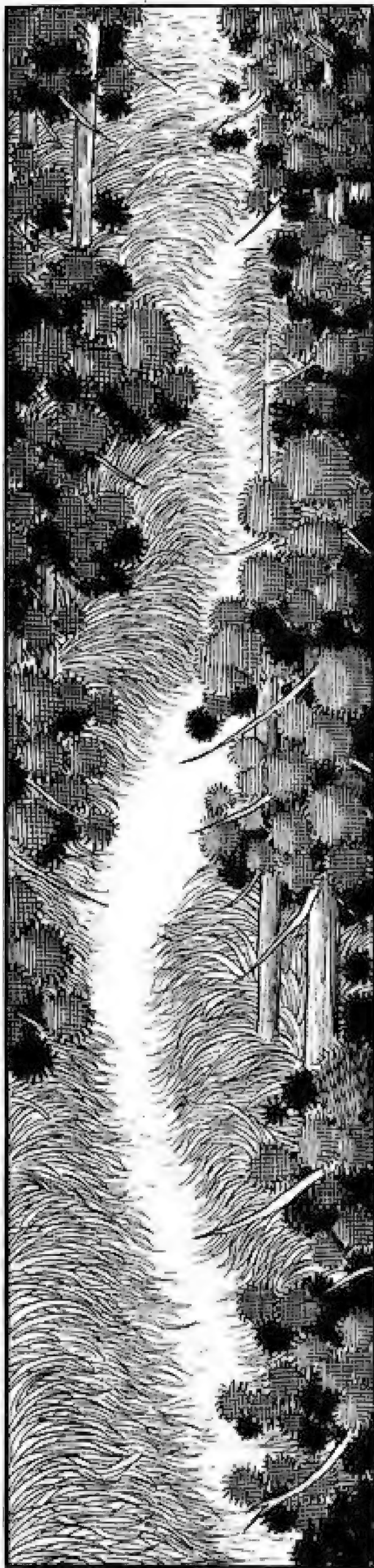




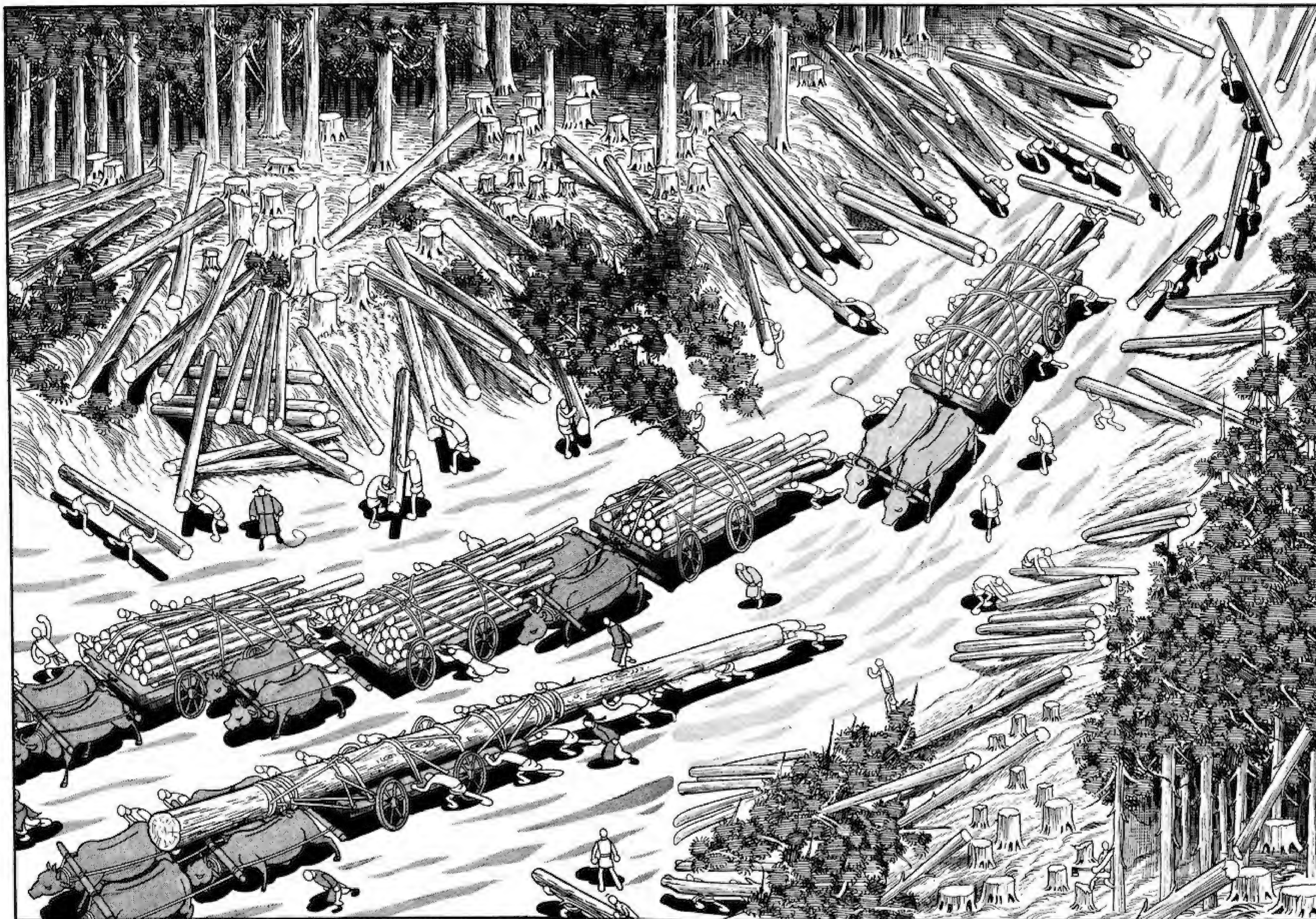




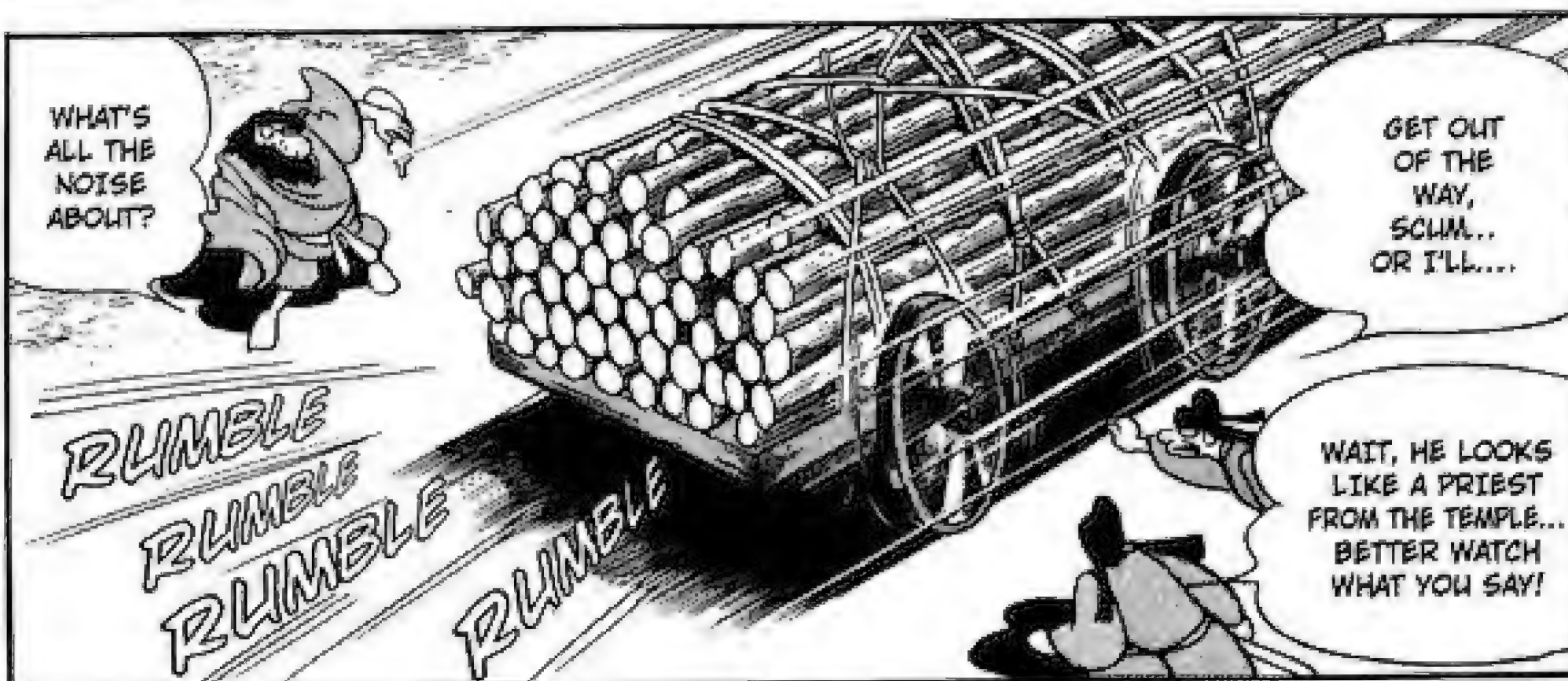
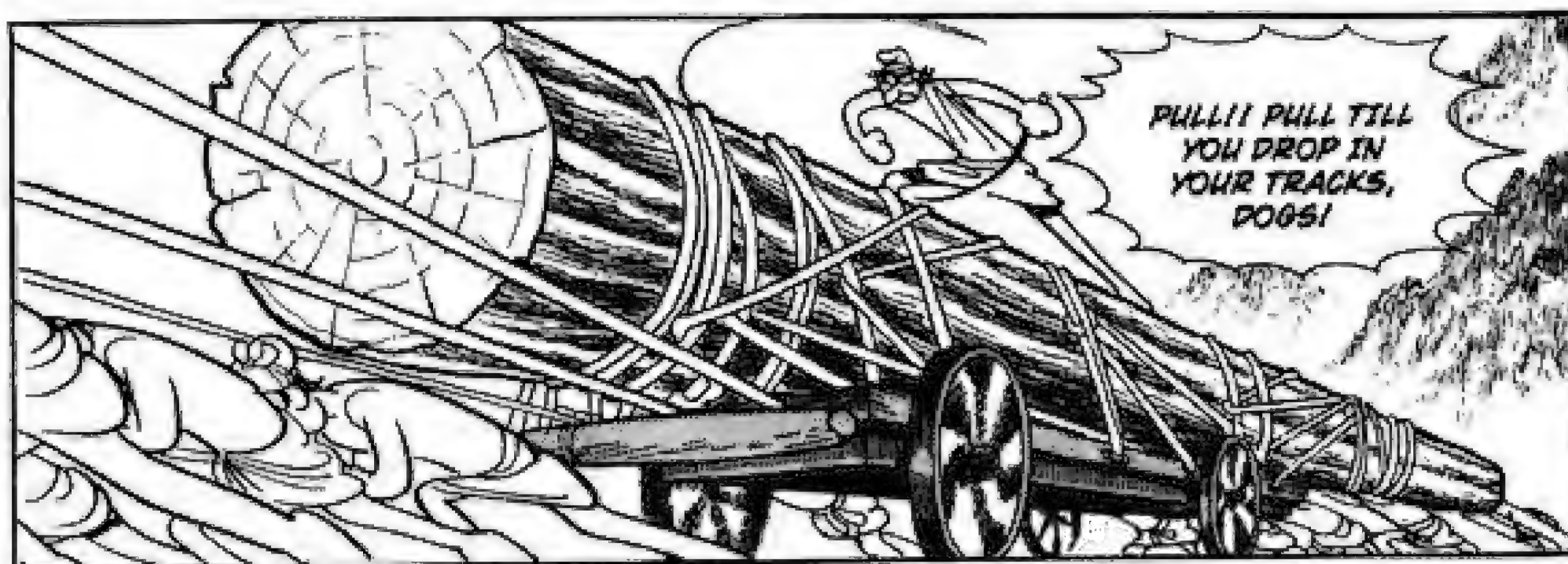
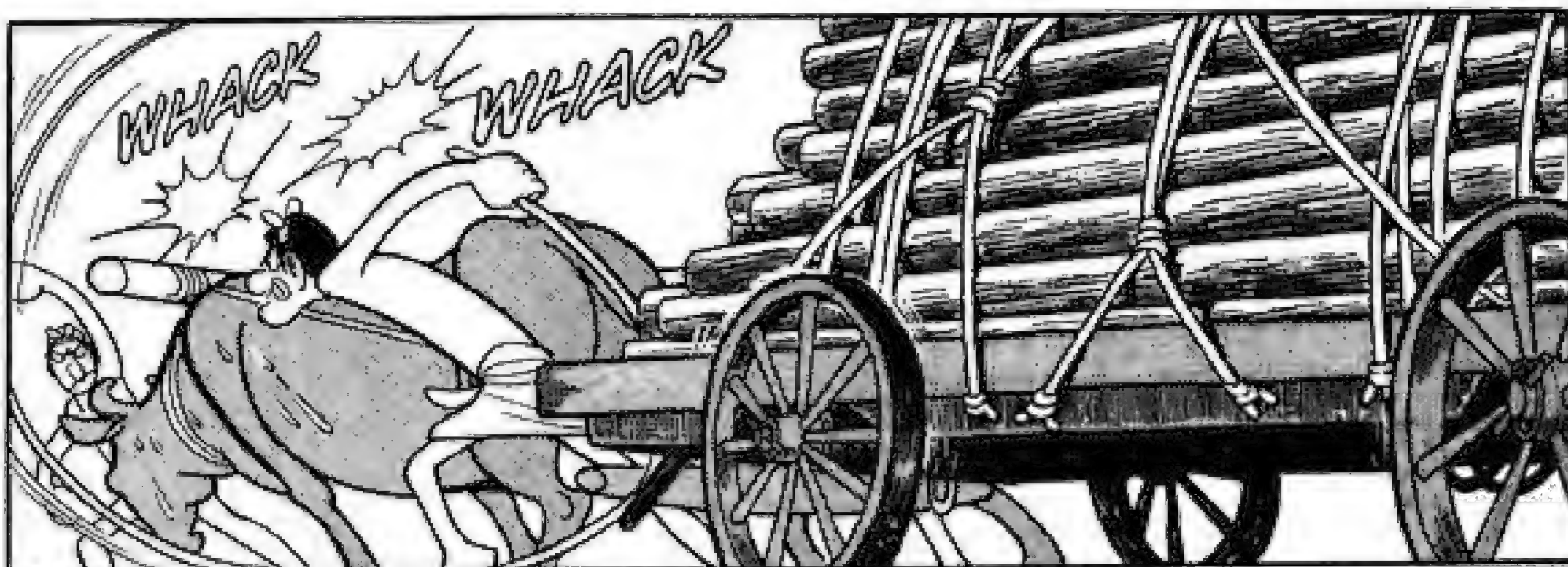




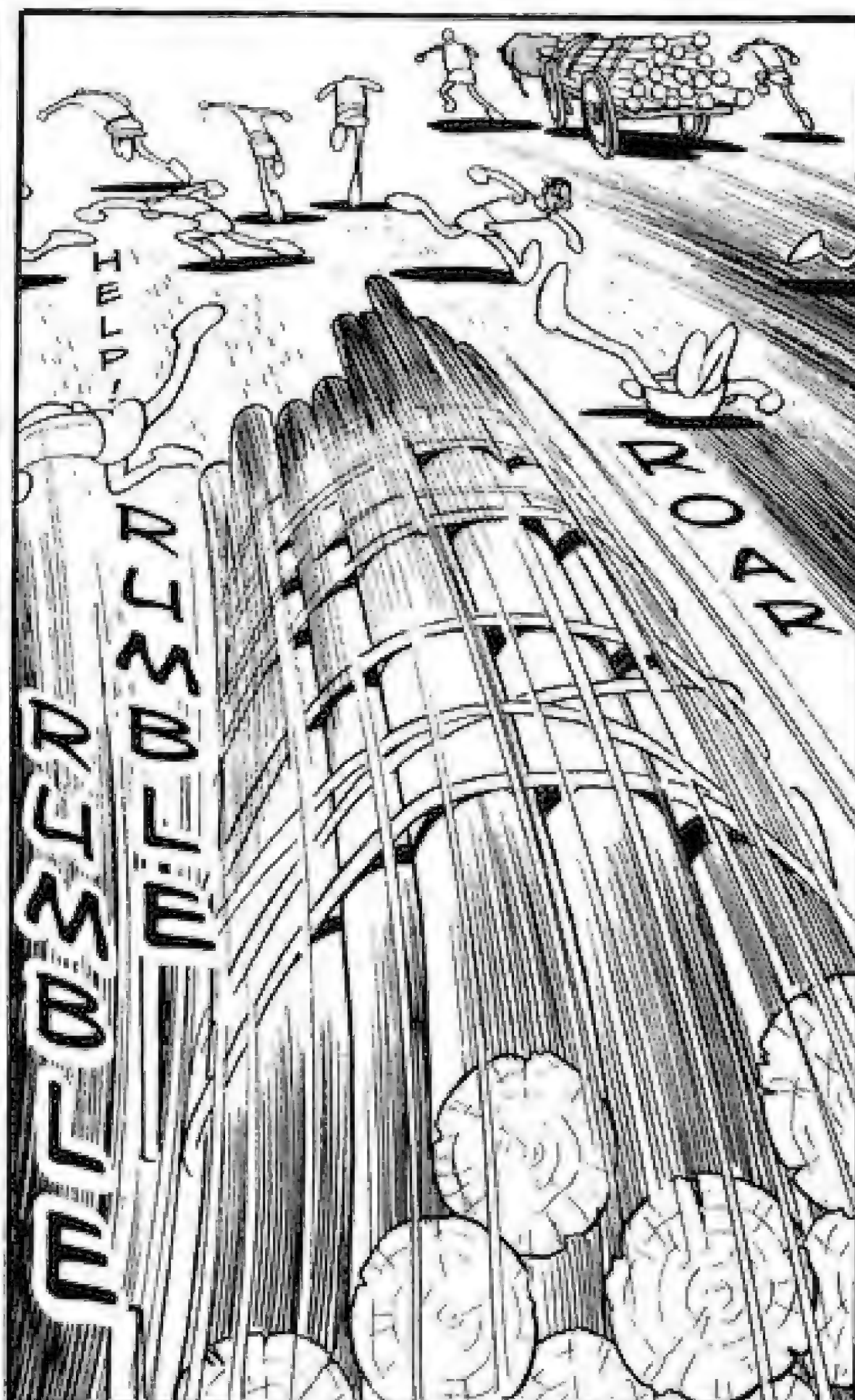
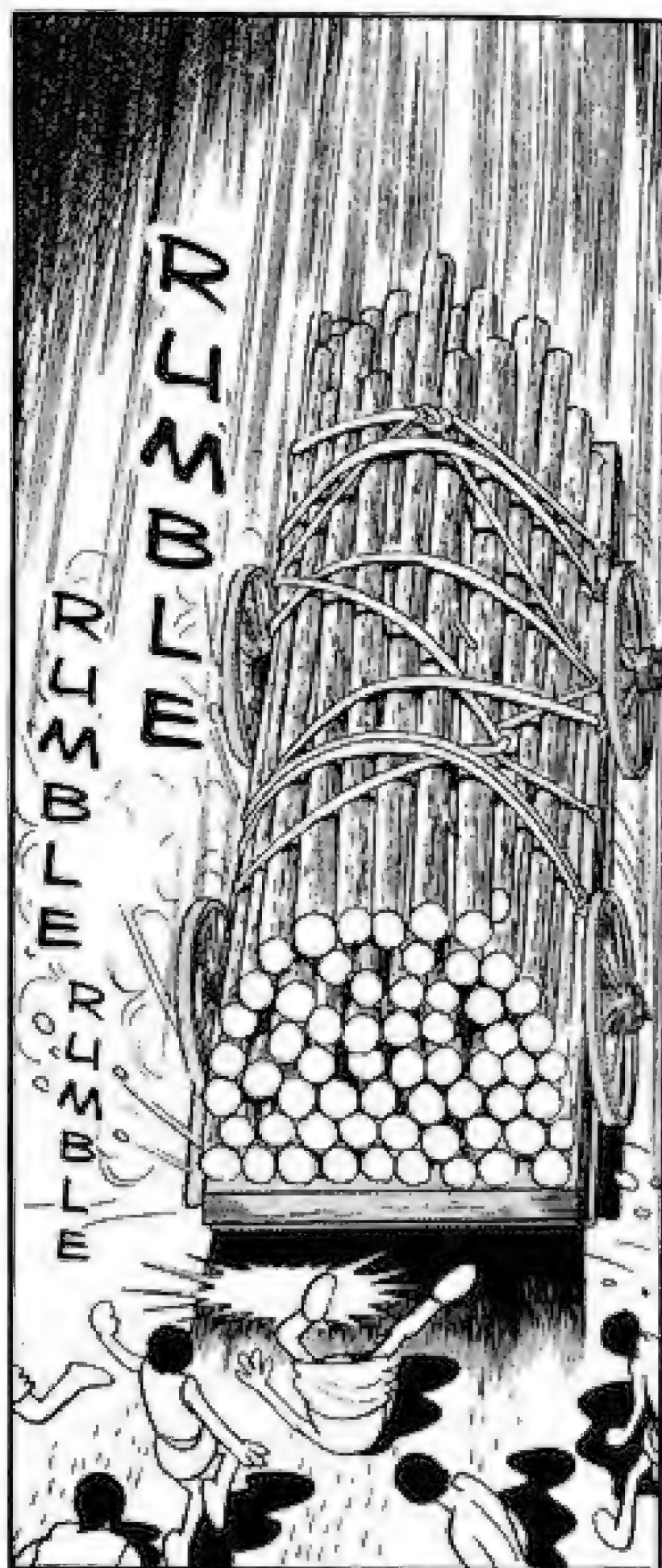




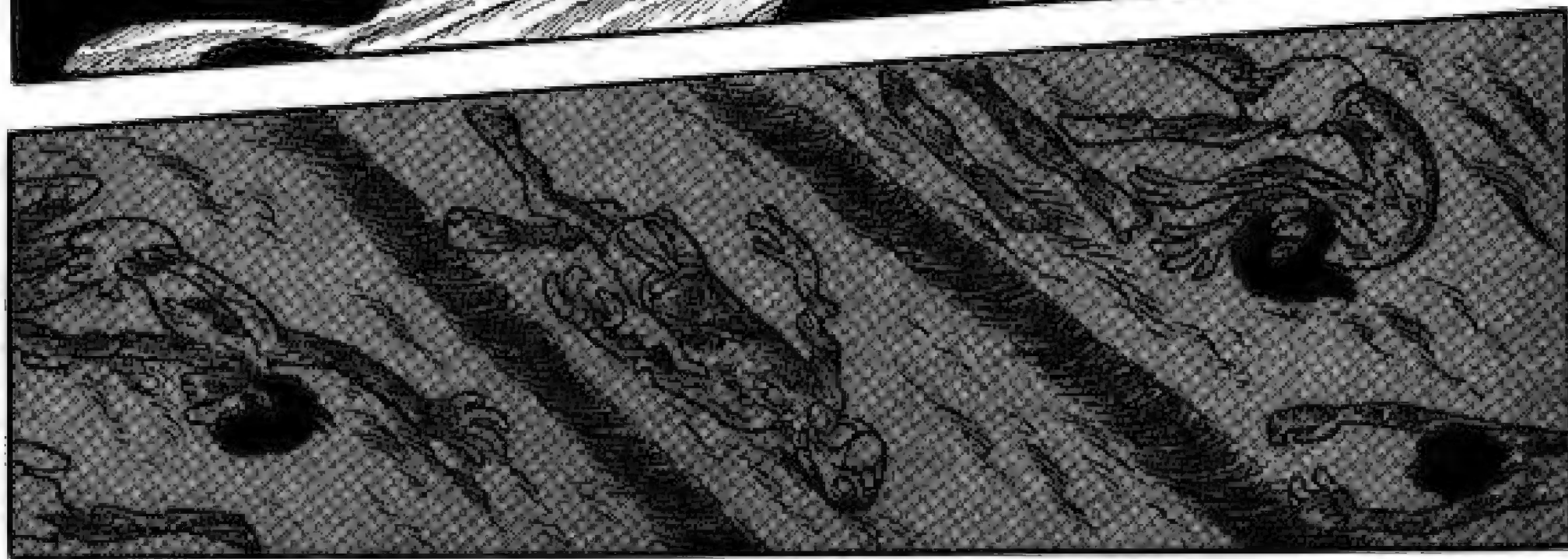










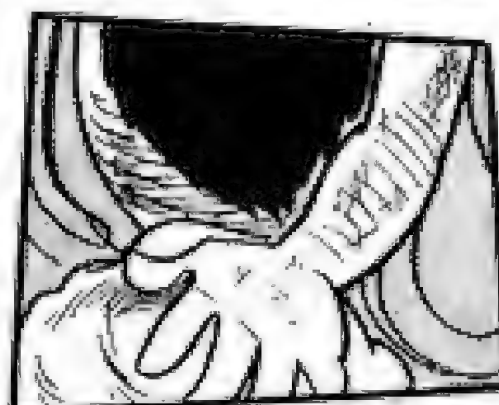
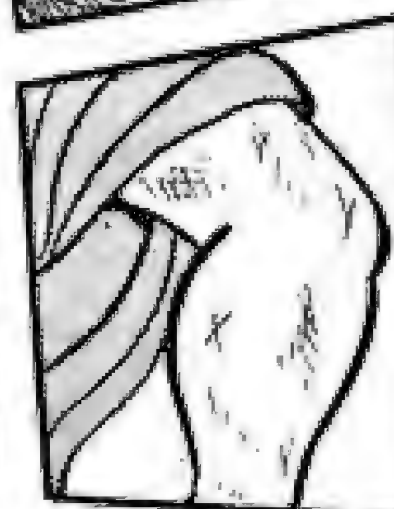
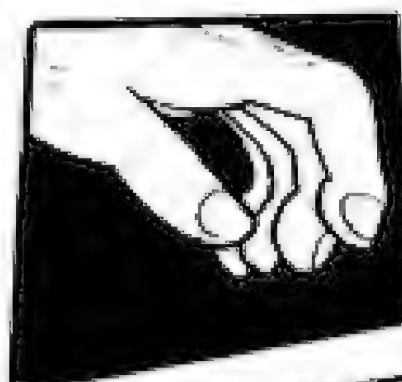
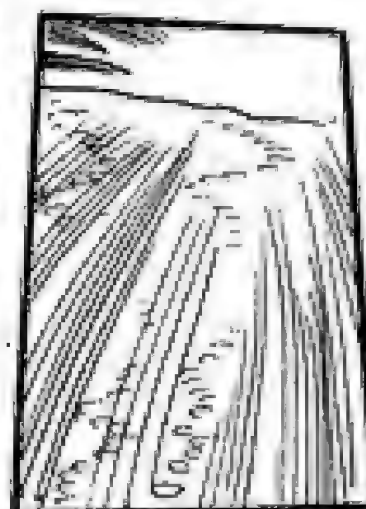
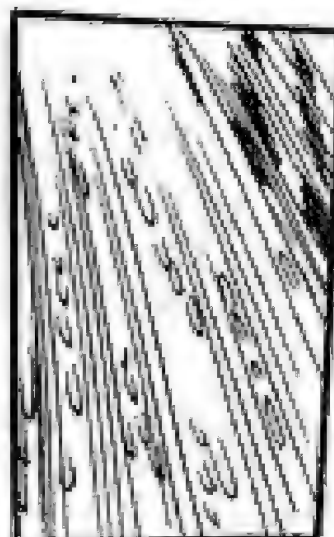
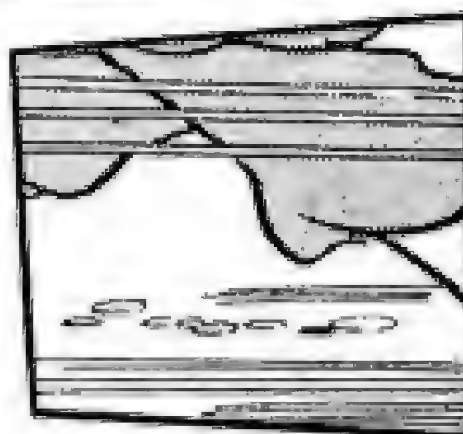
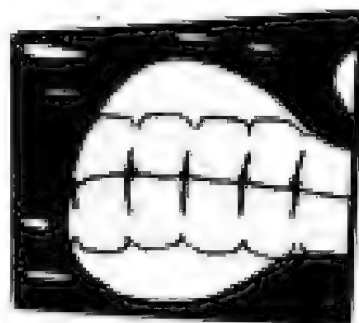


HMM...  
ANOTHER  
DOZEN  
DEAD...

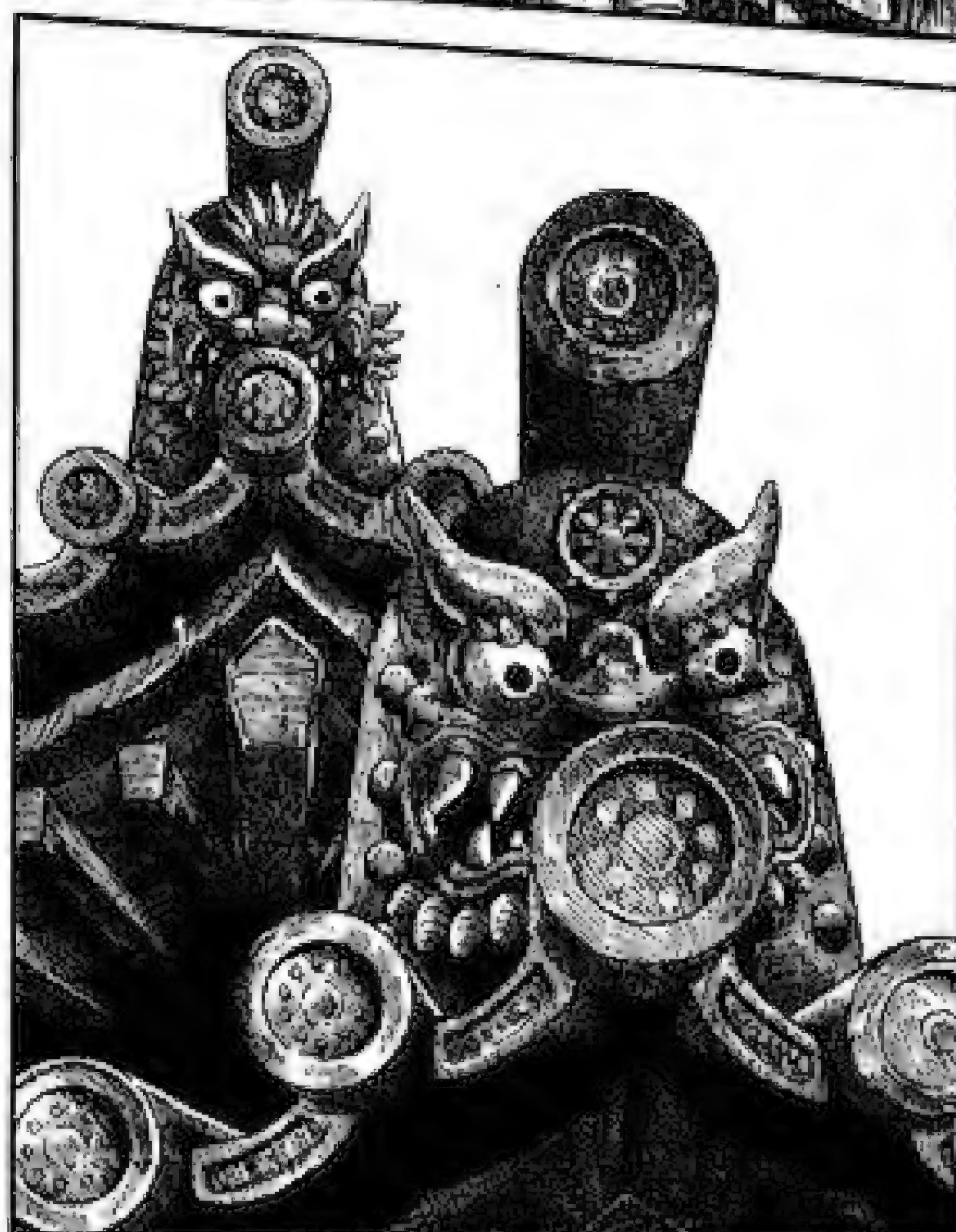
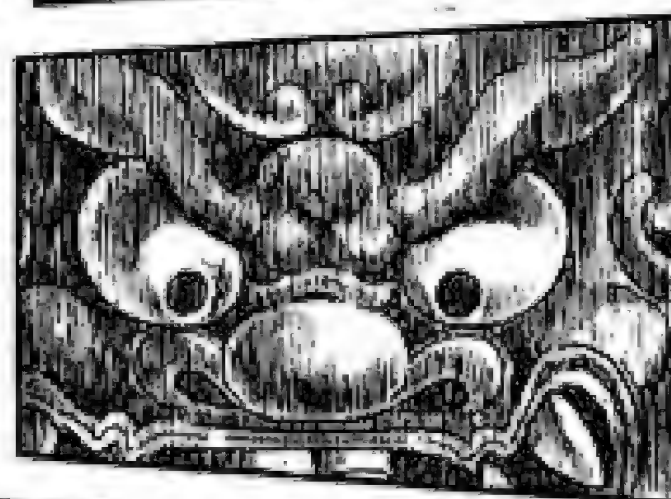
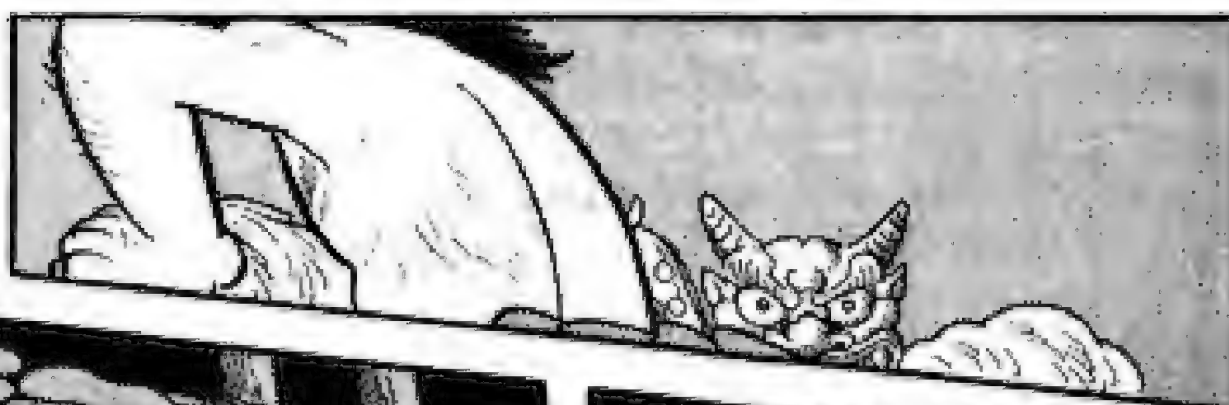


ALL RIGHT,  
PRIEST, I  
GUESS THESE  
COME UNDER  
YOUR  
JURISDIC-  
TION!

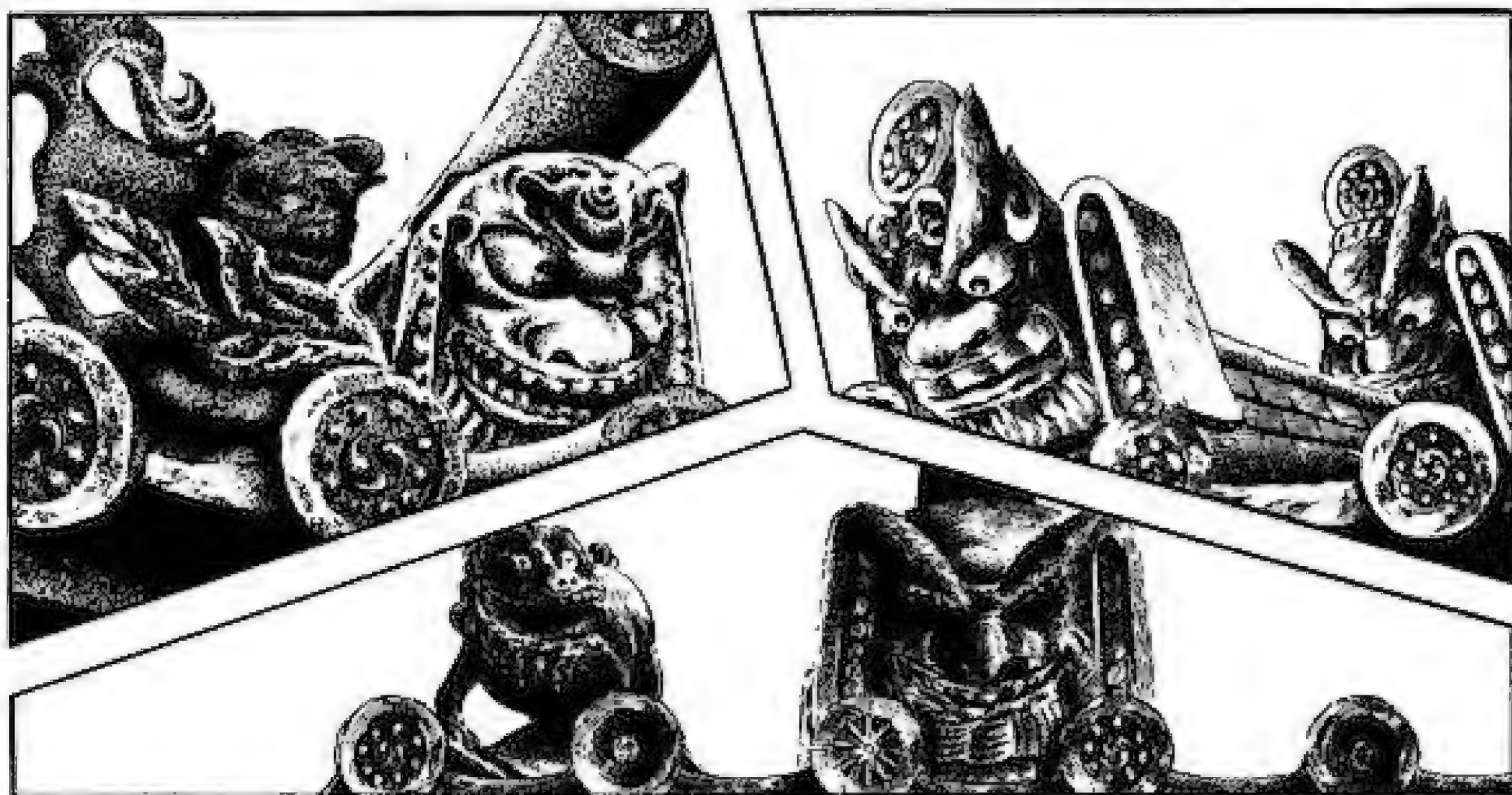






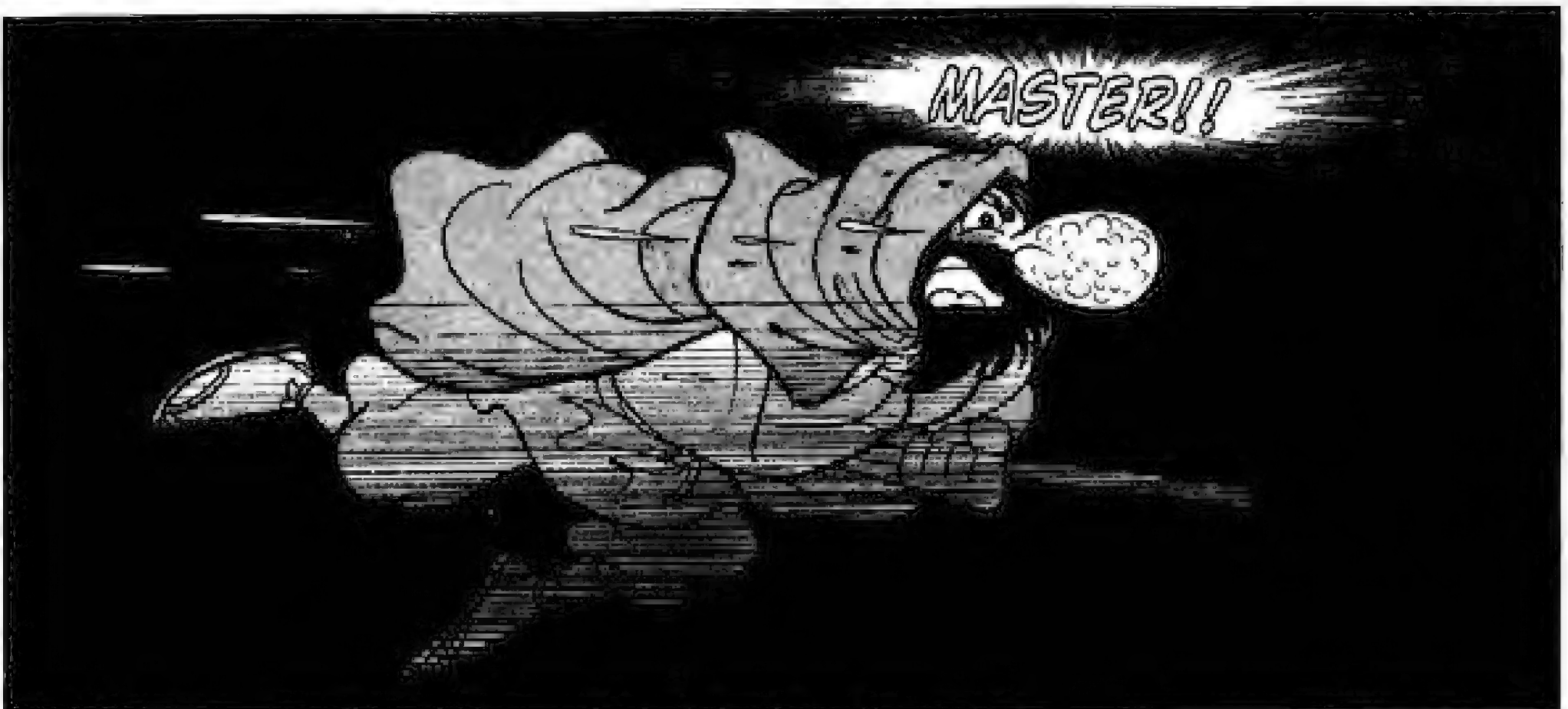




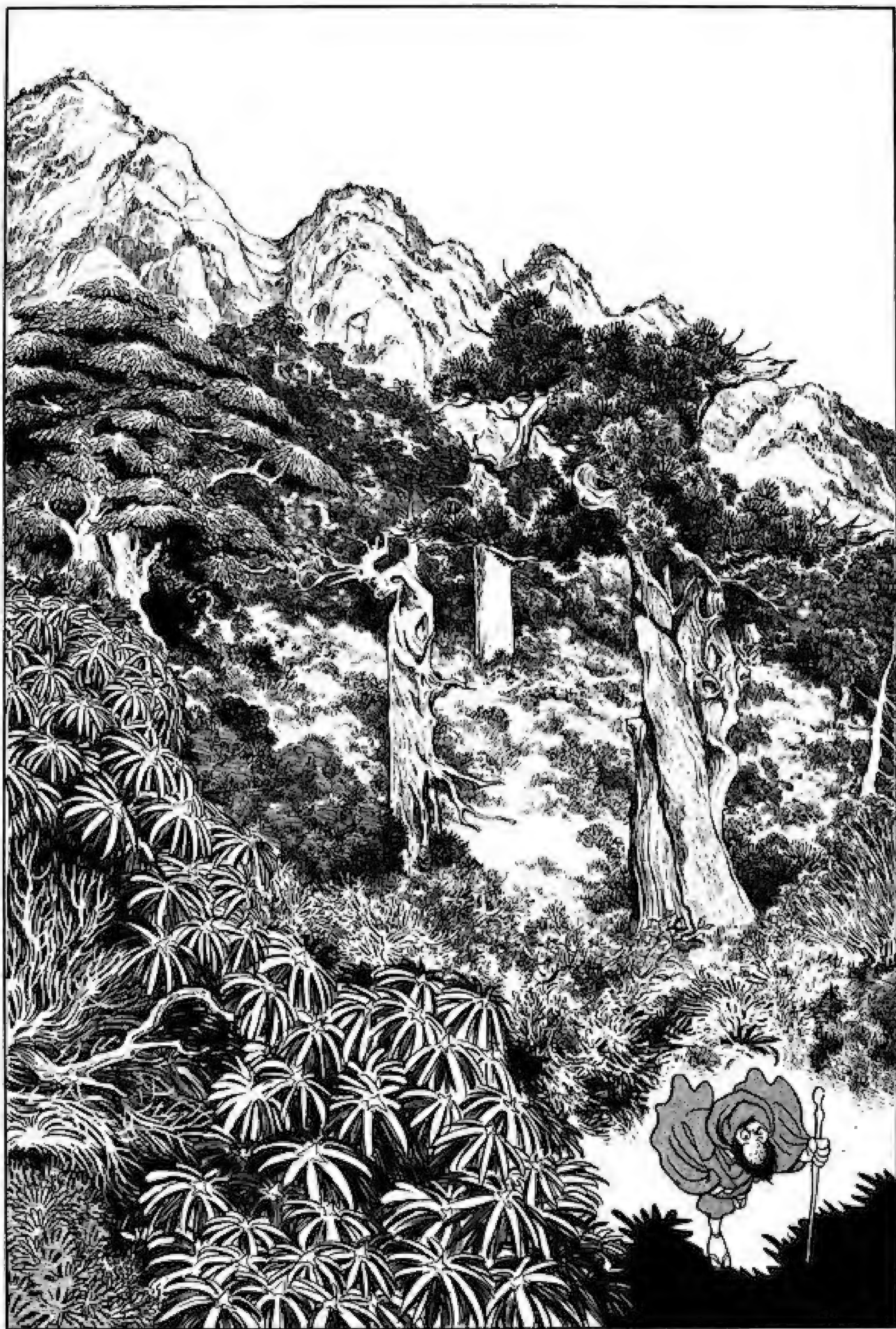


\*INSTANT BUDDHA HOOD (SOKUSHINBUTSU): A BUDDHIST TERM FOR THE ACT OF ATTAINING BUDDHA HOOD WHILE STILL IN ONE'S LIVING FORM. LITERALLY INVOLVES BEING BURIED ALIVE WITH ONLY AN AIR SUPPLY AND THEN MEDITATING UNTIL DEATH IN A MUMMIFIED STATE. NO LONGER PRACTICED.













PLEASE  
PLEASE  
!!

OPEN  
THE  
GATE!

I'M  
ABBOT  
ROBEN'S  
ATTENDANT,  
GAO!



MASTER  
ROBEN  
!

PLEASE  
LET ME  
SEE HIM!  
JUST  
FOR A  
SECOND!



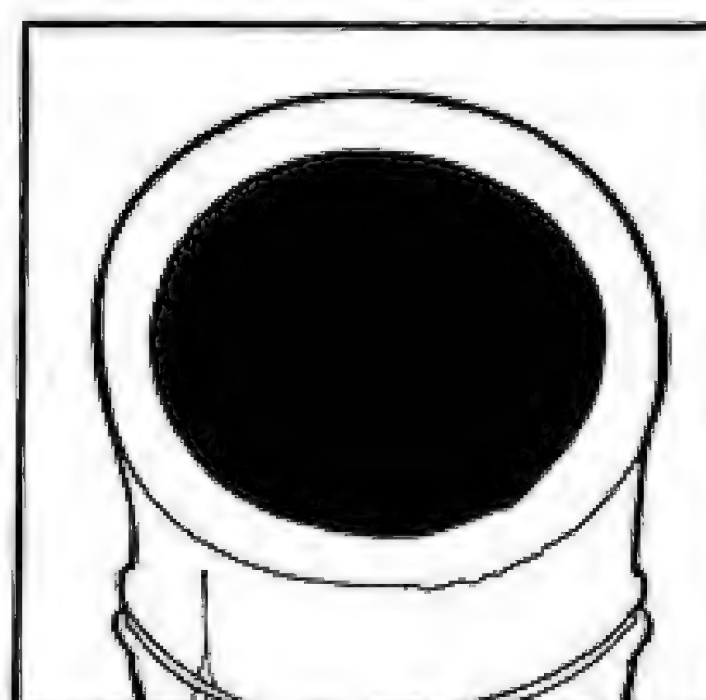


\*ECHIGO: A LOCALE NEAR PRESENT DAY NIGATA PREFECTURE, JAPAN. IN ORDER TO ARRIVE AT THE HIRAIZUMI TEMPLE, GAO HAD TO TRAVEL HUNDREDS OF MILES.









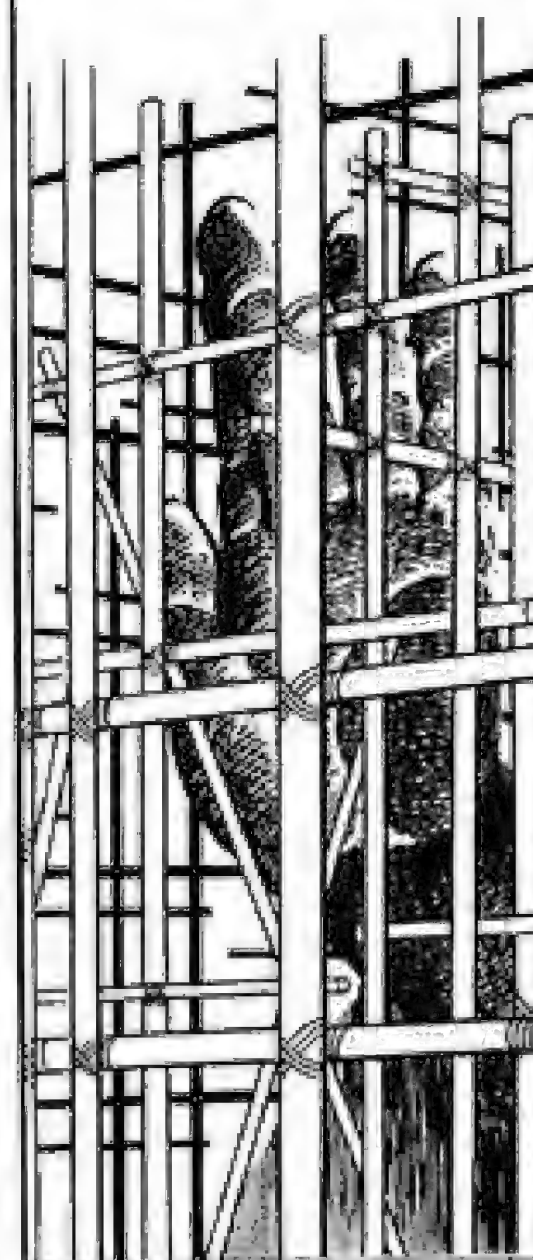


CAN YOU UNDERSTAND  
NOW WHY I ABANDONED  
YOU WHEN YOU WERE  
THROWN IN THE DUNGEON?  
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE  
THE BEST SPIRITUAL  
TRAINING I COULD DEVISE  
FOR YOU, AND SHOULD YOU  
SURVIVE IT, THAT  
SPIRITUALLY YOU WOULD  
BE CAPABLE OF  
CARVING A *TRUE*  
BUDDHA.

YOUR CARVINGS  
BELONG TO YOU  
ALONE, GAO, AND  
NO ONE CAN  
IMITATE OR  
STEAL THEM.

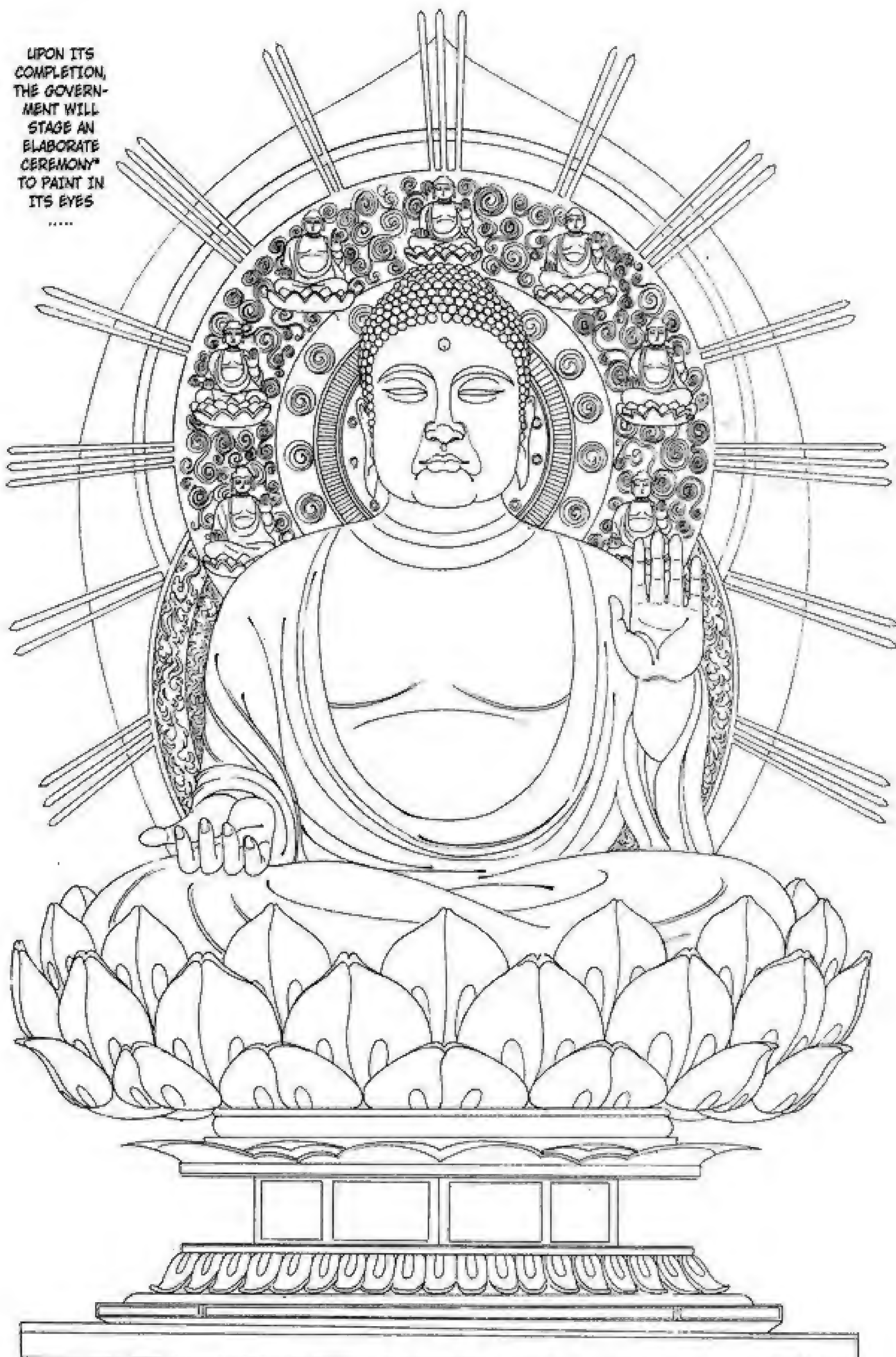


AT THIS VERY  
MOMENT THEY  
ARE BUILDING  
THE GREAT  
BUDDHA IN THE  
CAPITAL. IT IS  
NO DOUBT A  
WONDER TO SEE,  
BUT IT IS NO  
MORE THAN A  
SHOWPIECE!





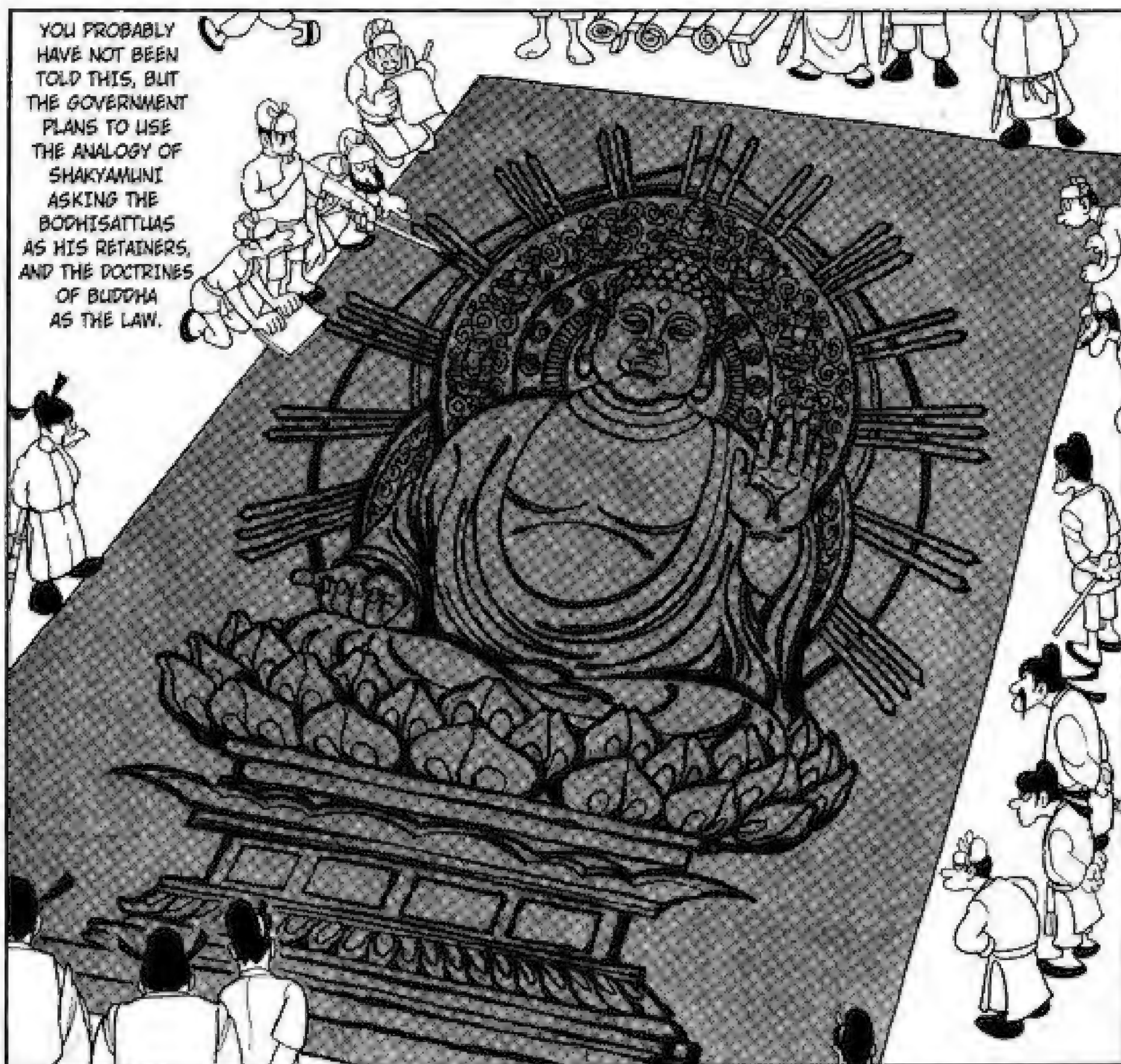
UPON ITS  
COMPLETION,  
THE GOVERN-  
MENT WILL  
STAGE AN  
ELABORATE  
CEREMONY\*  
TO PAINT IN  
ITS EYES



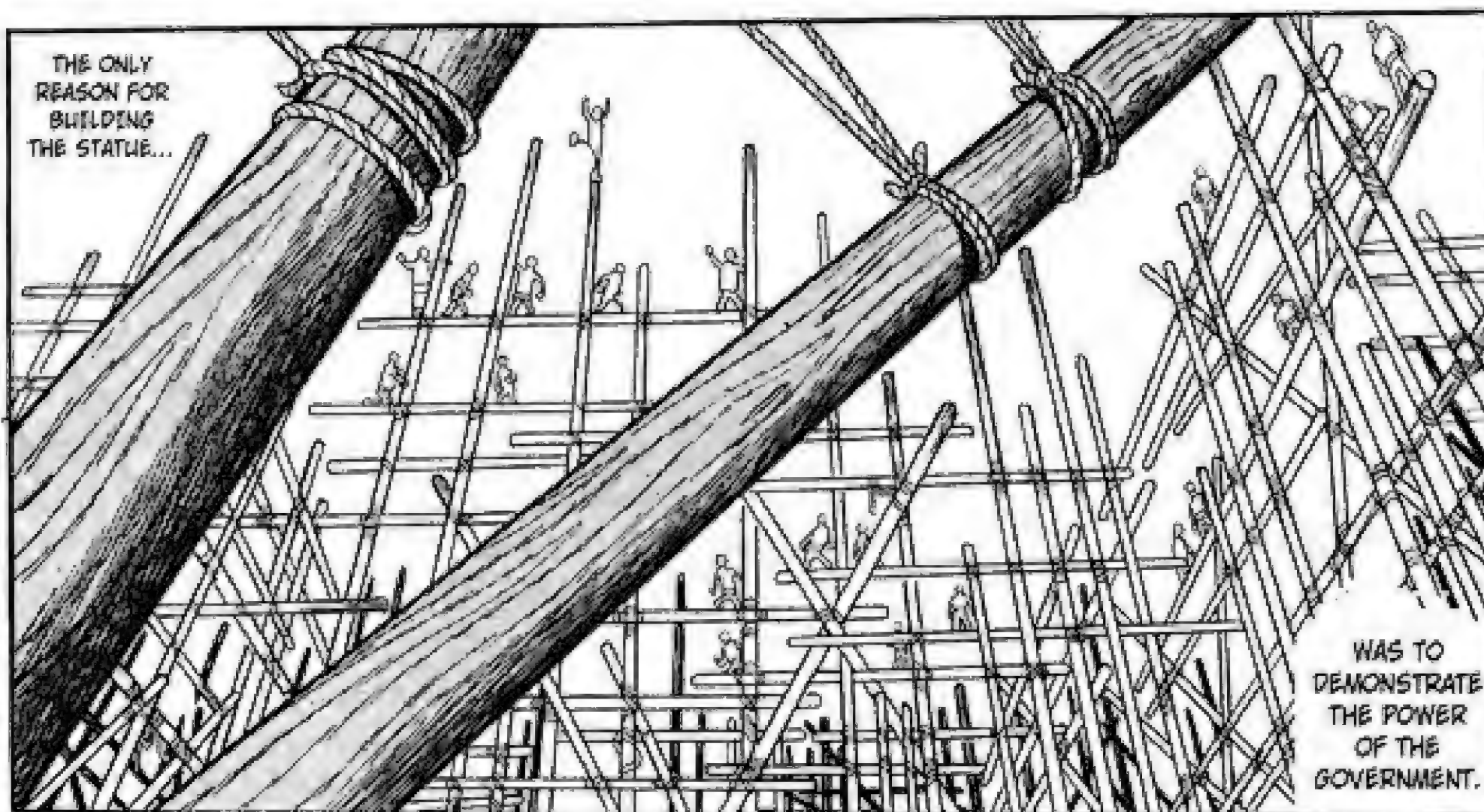
\*EYE OPENING CEREMONY: IN ACTUAL HISTORY, THE EYES OF THE BUDDHA IN THE  
TODAIJI WERE PAINTED IN IN 752 A.D., THIS GIVING "LIFE" TO THE STATUE.



YOU PROBABLY  
HAVE NOT BEEN  
TOLD THIS, BUT  
THE GOVERNMENT  
PLANS TO USE  
THE ANALOGY OF  
SHAKYAMUNI  
ASKING THE  
BODHISATTVAS  
AS HIS RETAINERS,  
AND THE DOCTRINES  
OF BUDDHA  
AS THE LAW.

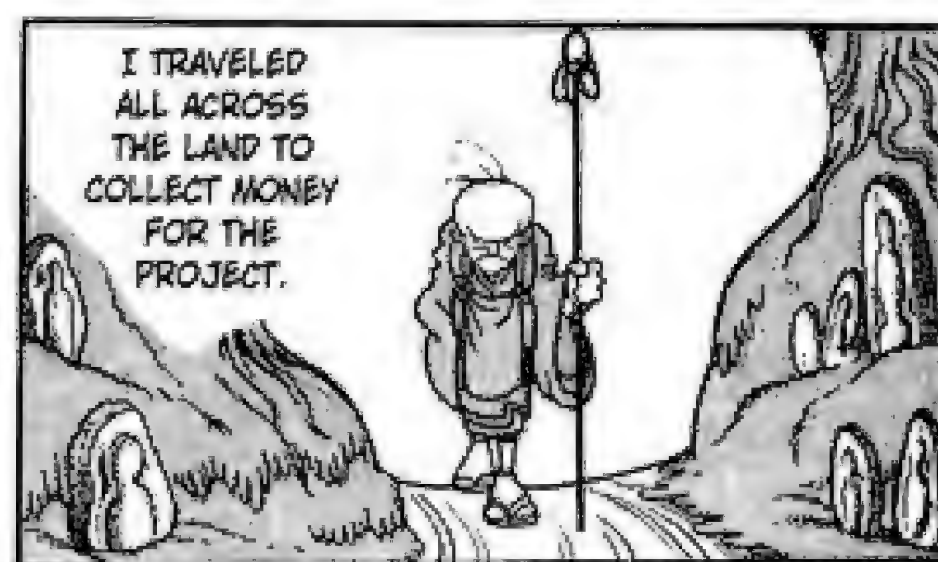
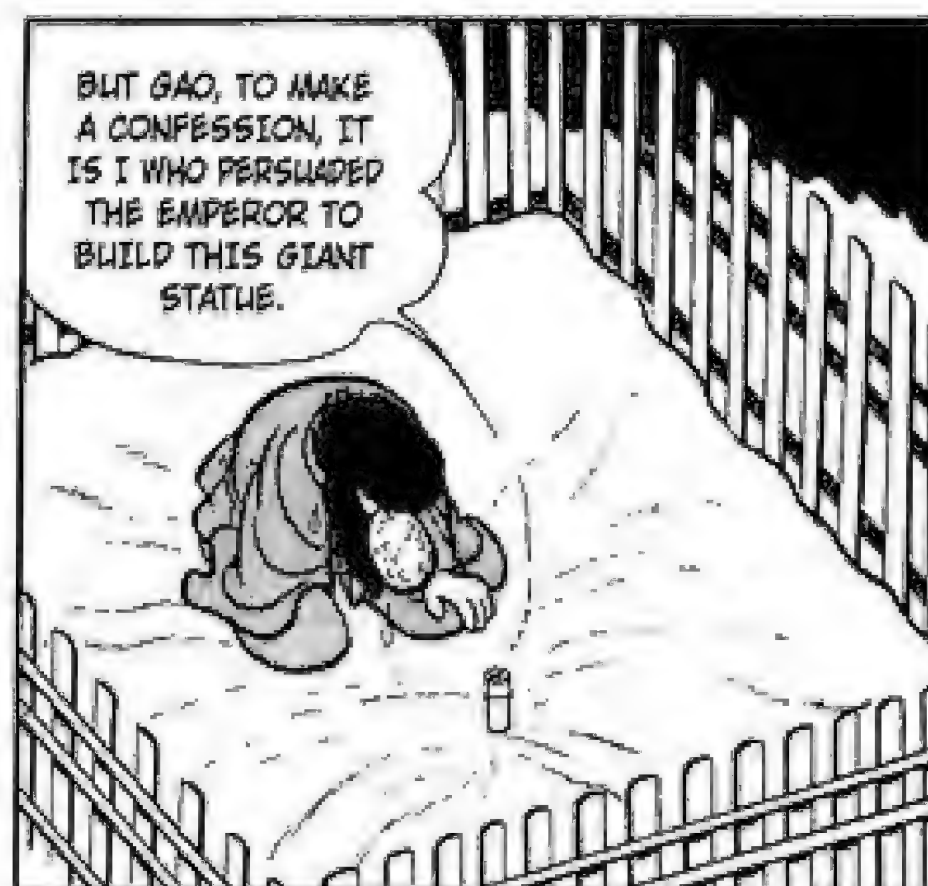
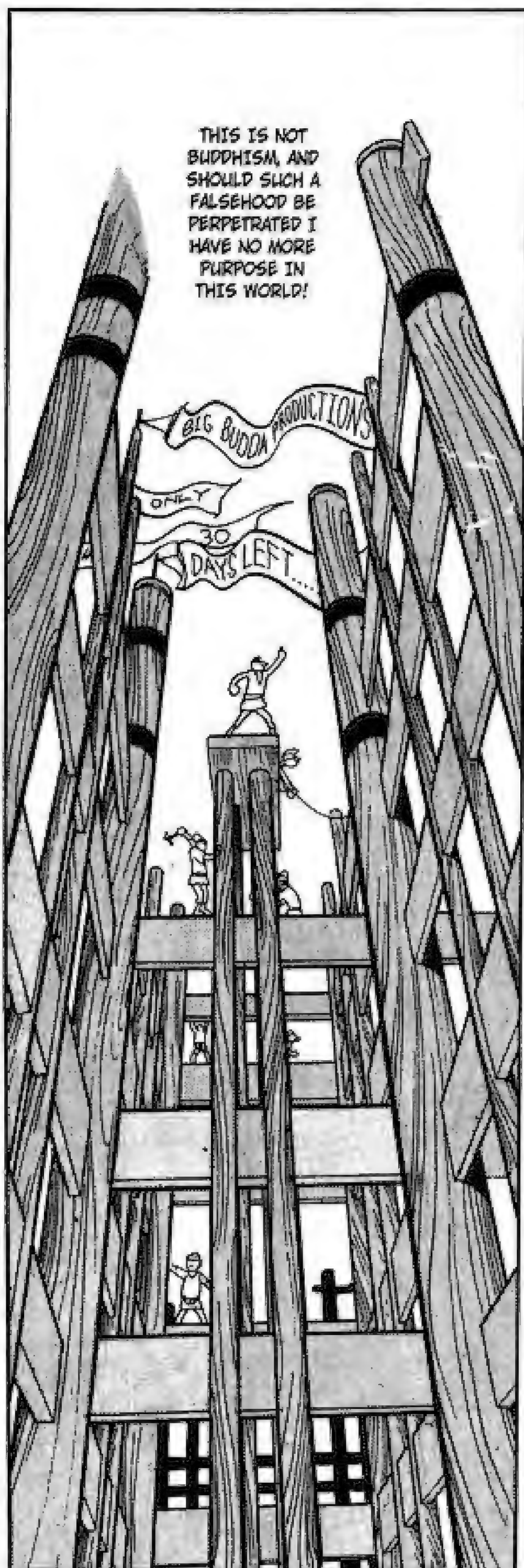


THE ONLY  
REASON FOR  
BUILDING  
THE STATUE...

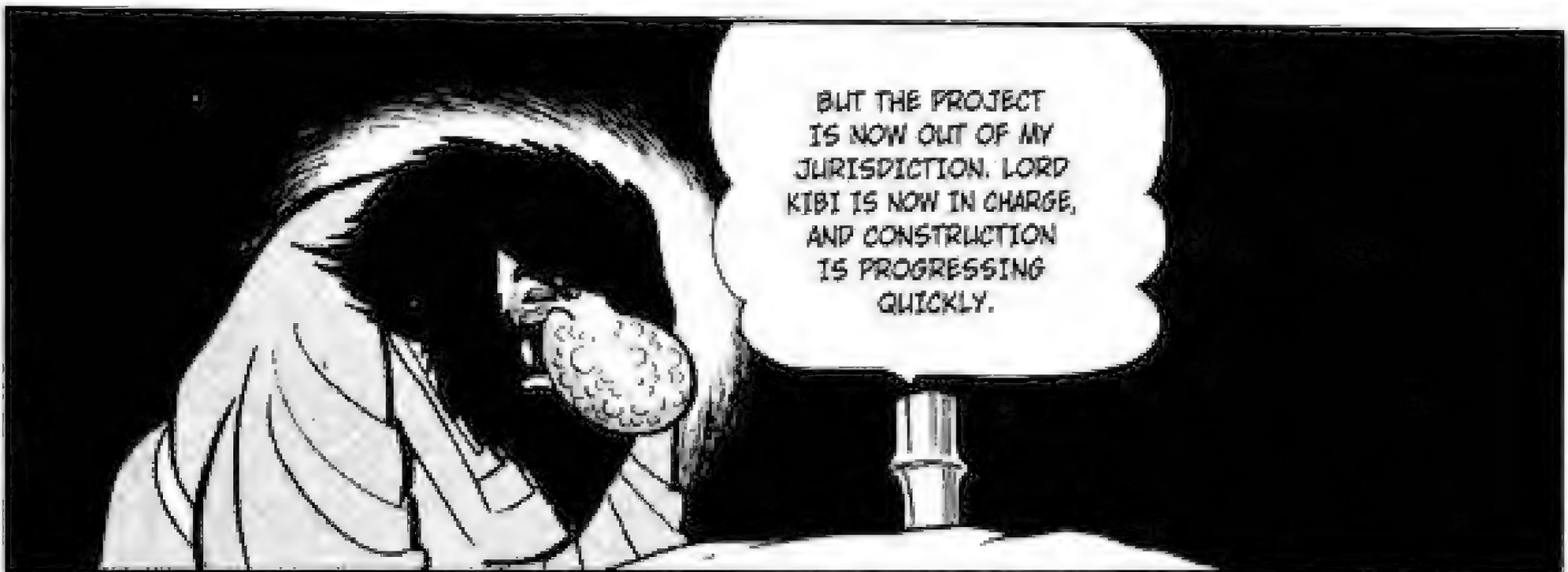
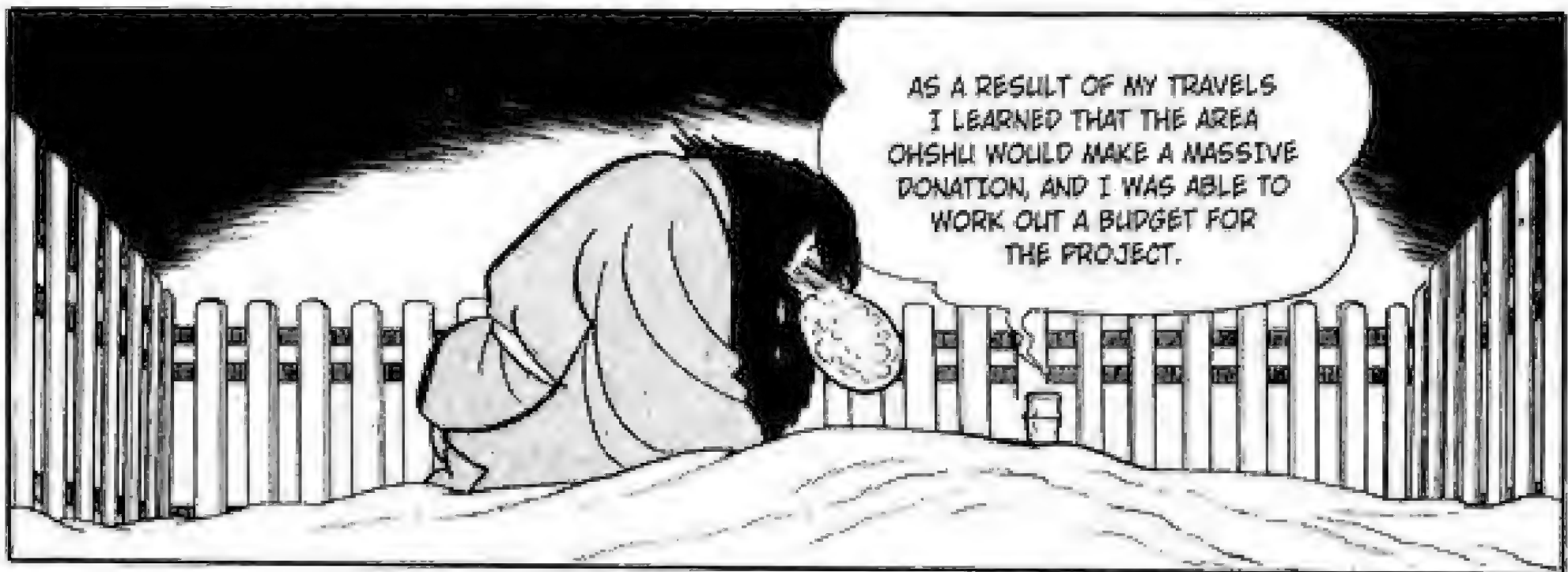


WAS TO  
DEMONSTRATE  
THE POWER  
OF THE  
GOVERNMENT.

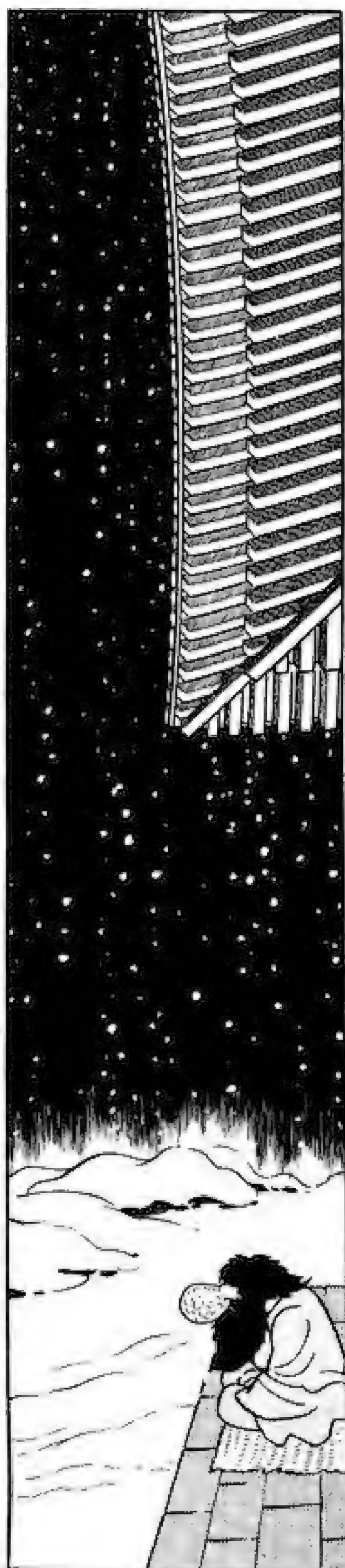
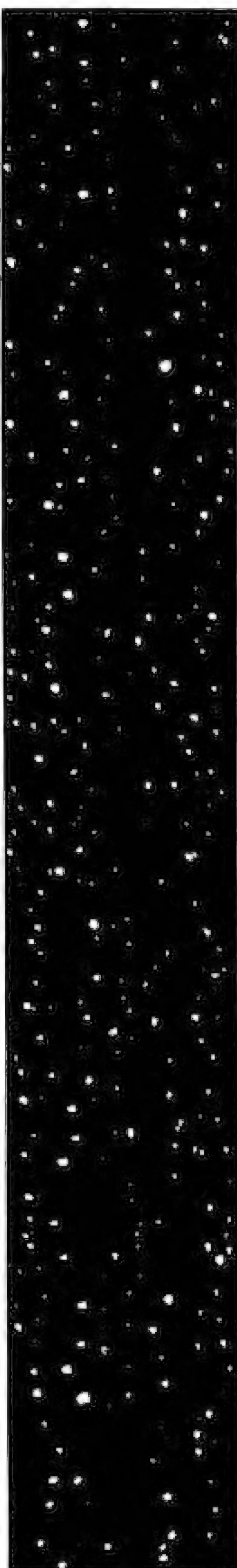




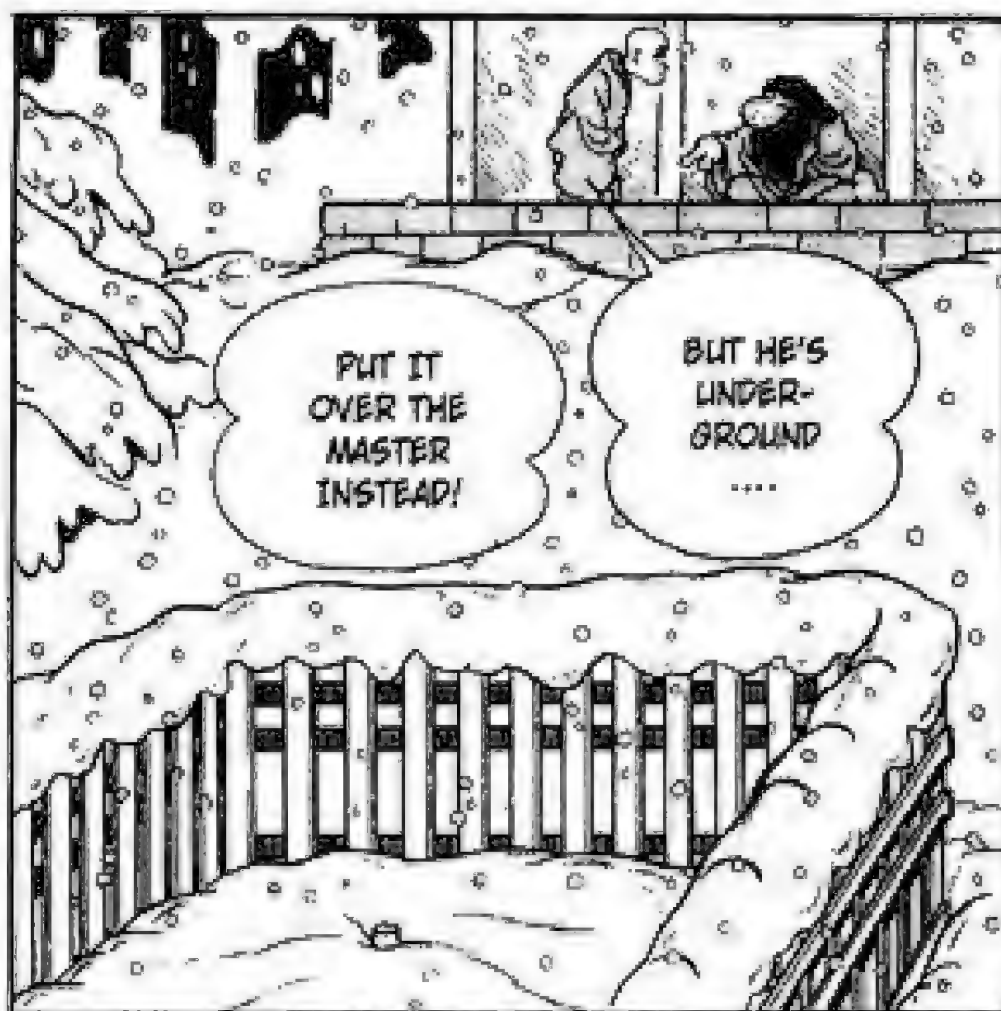
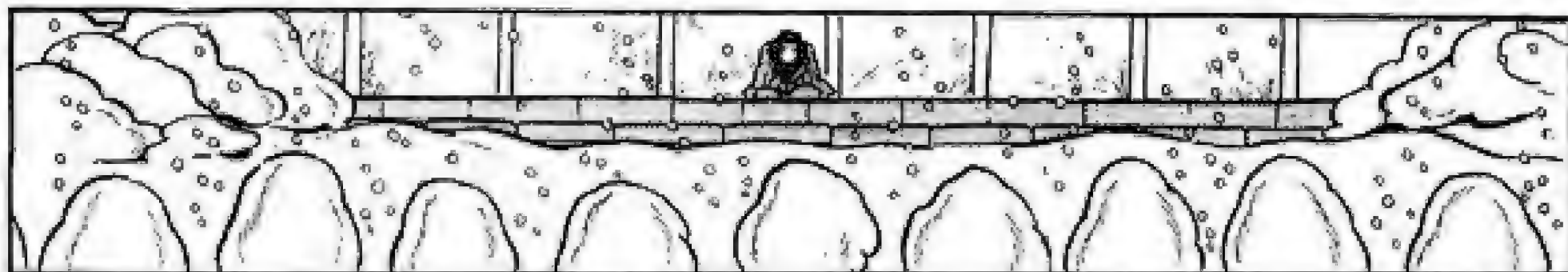
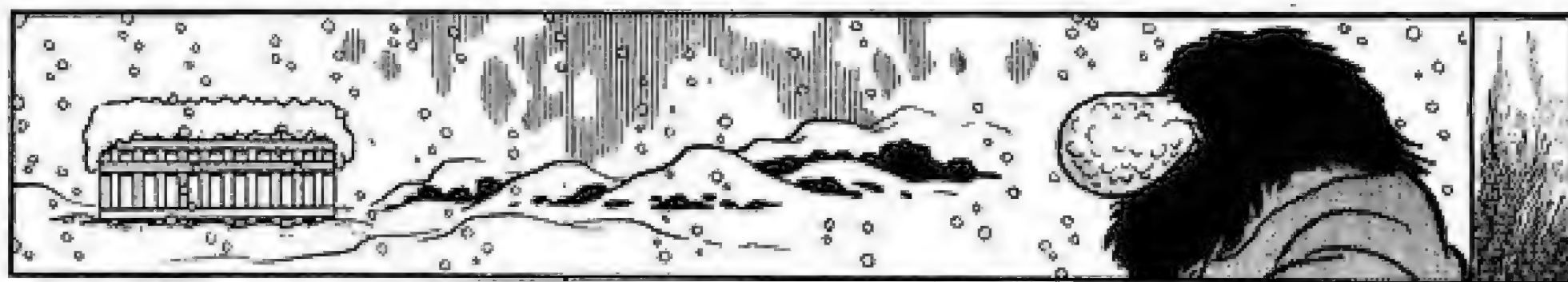




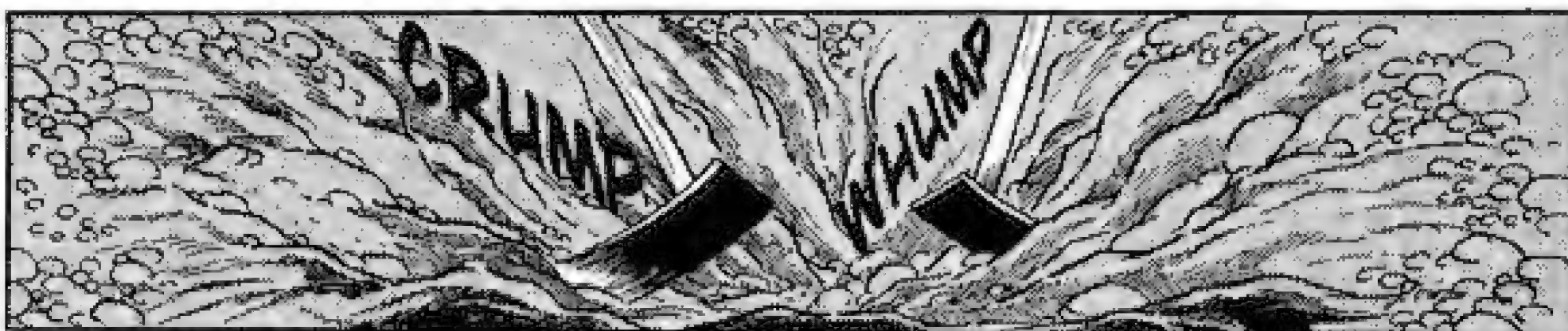
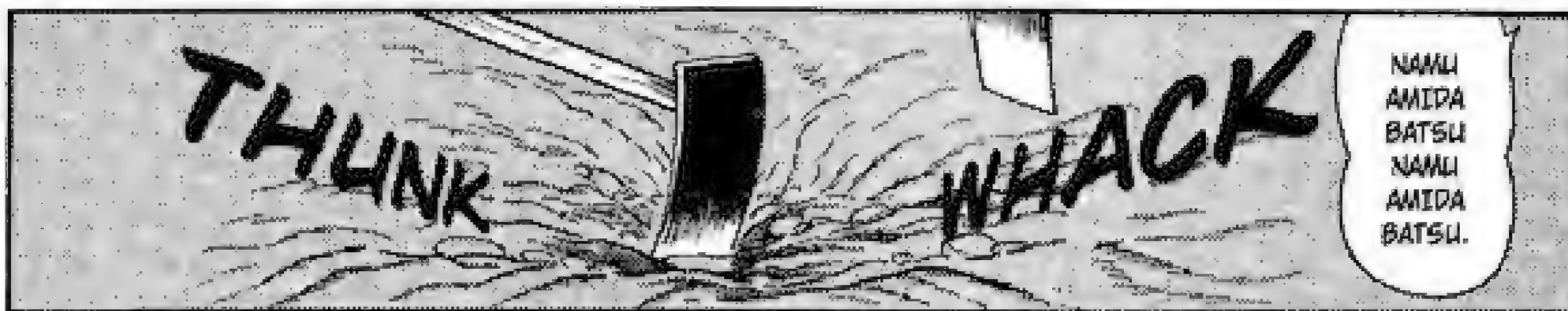




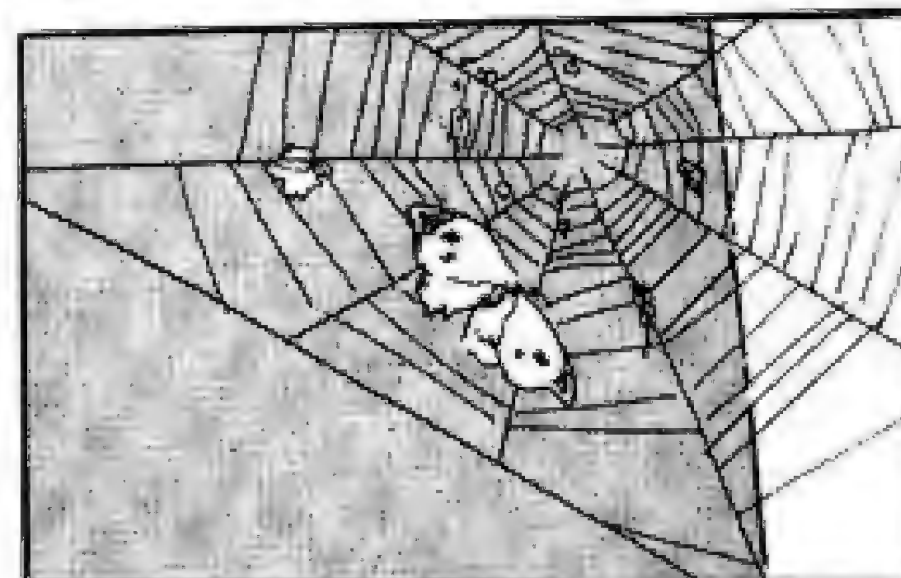
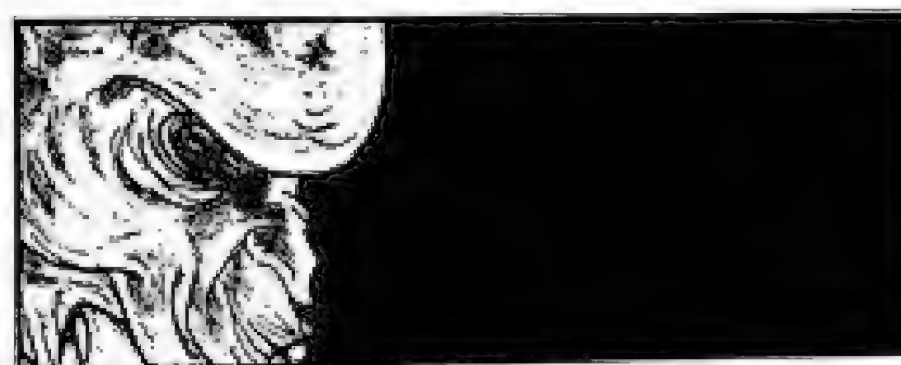
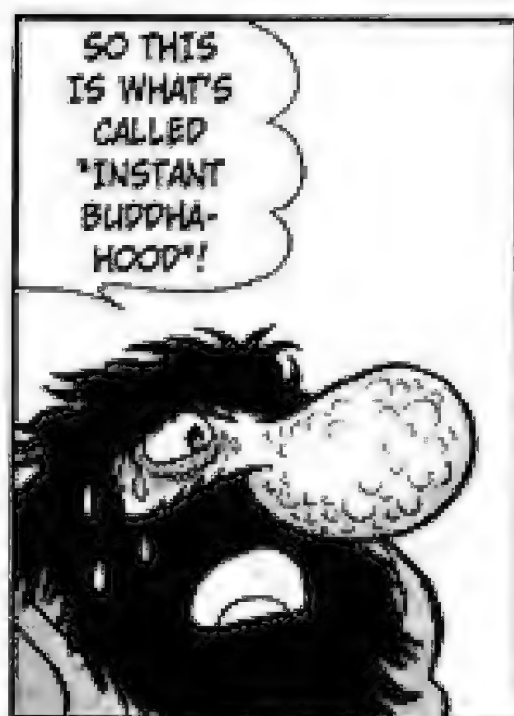




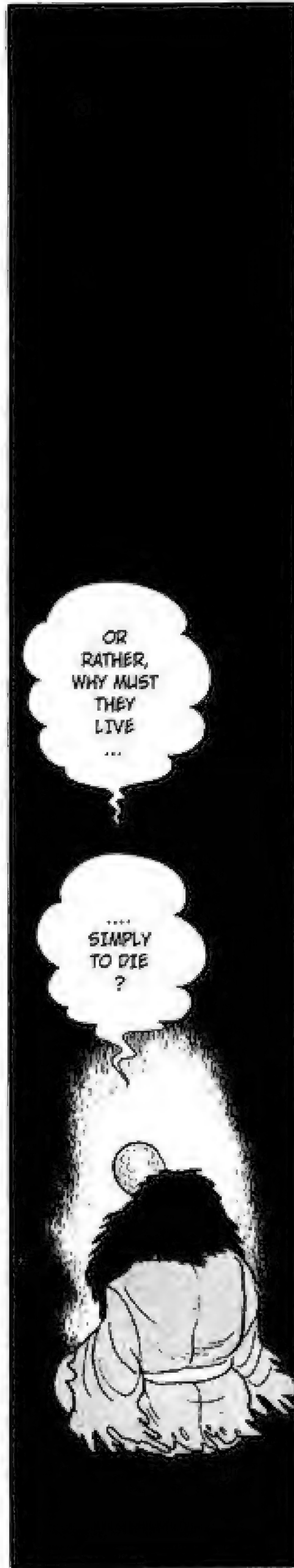
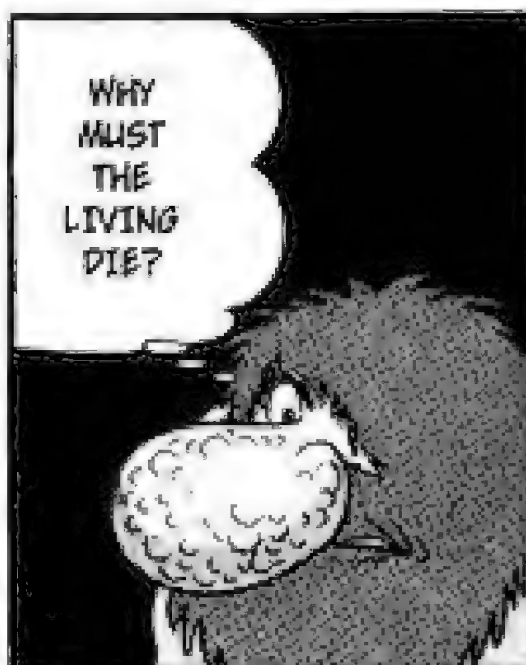
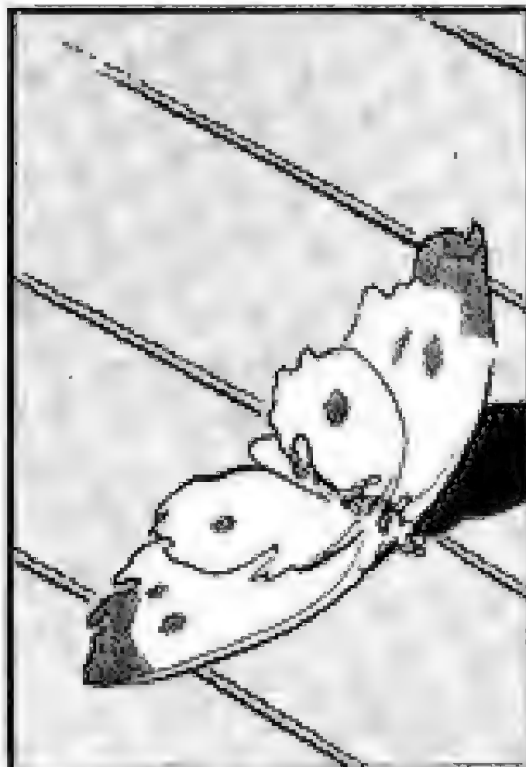




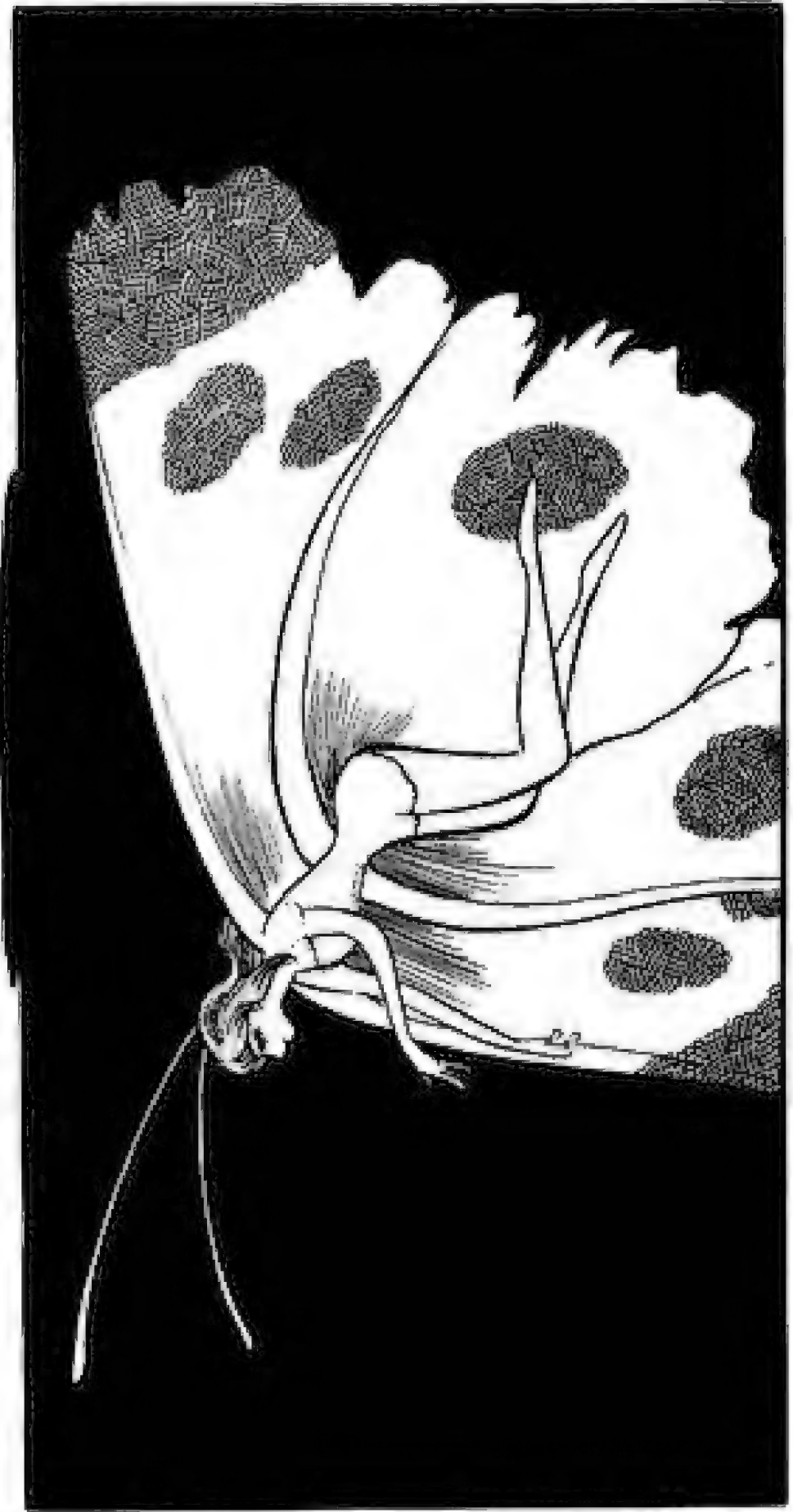
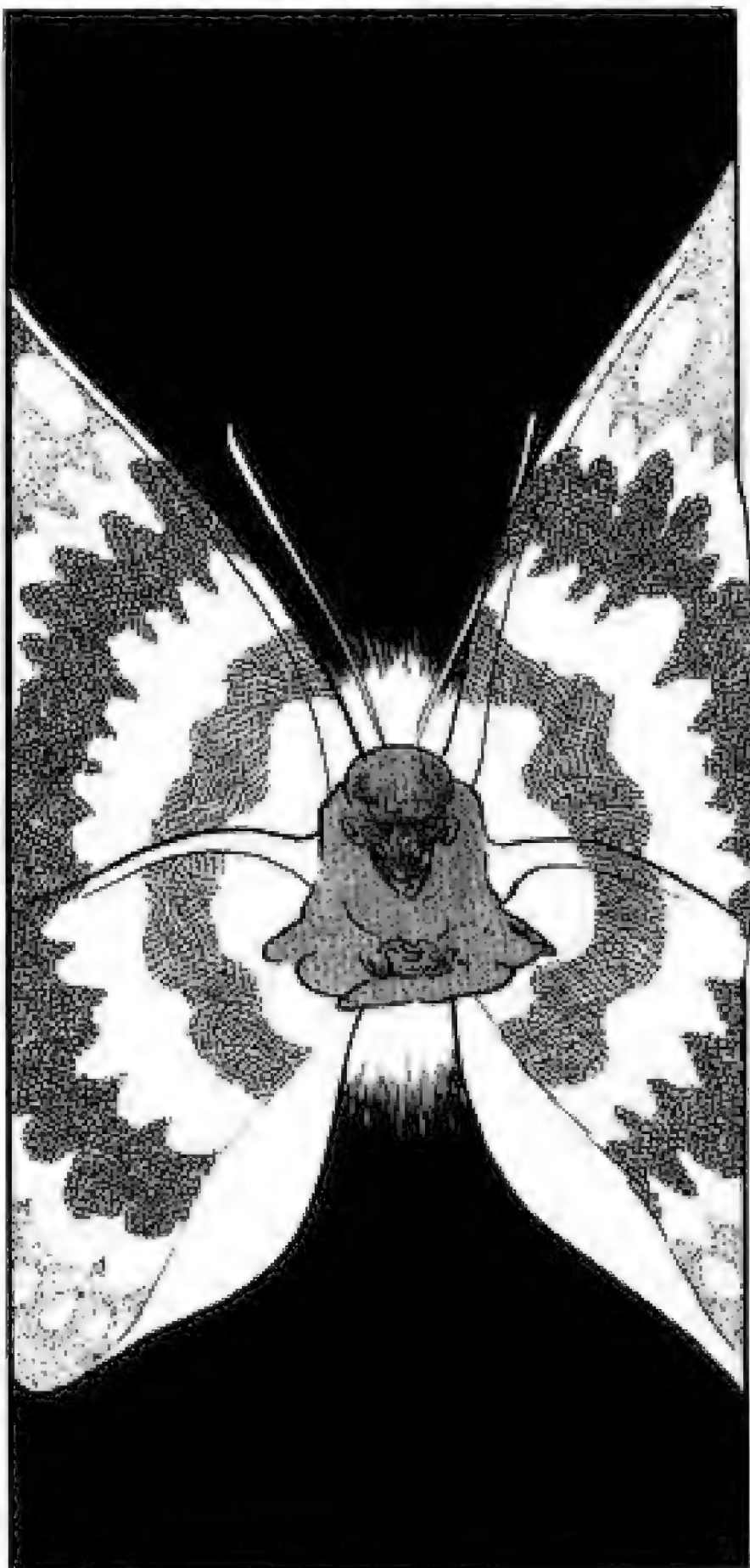
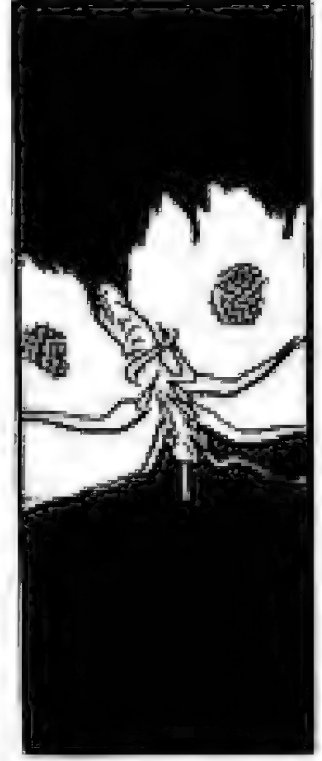
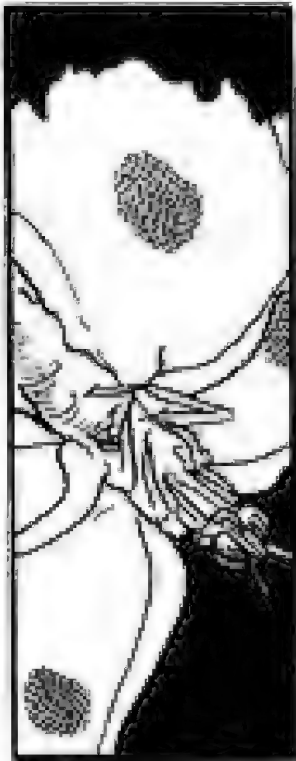




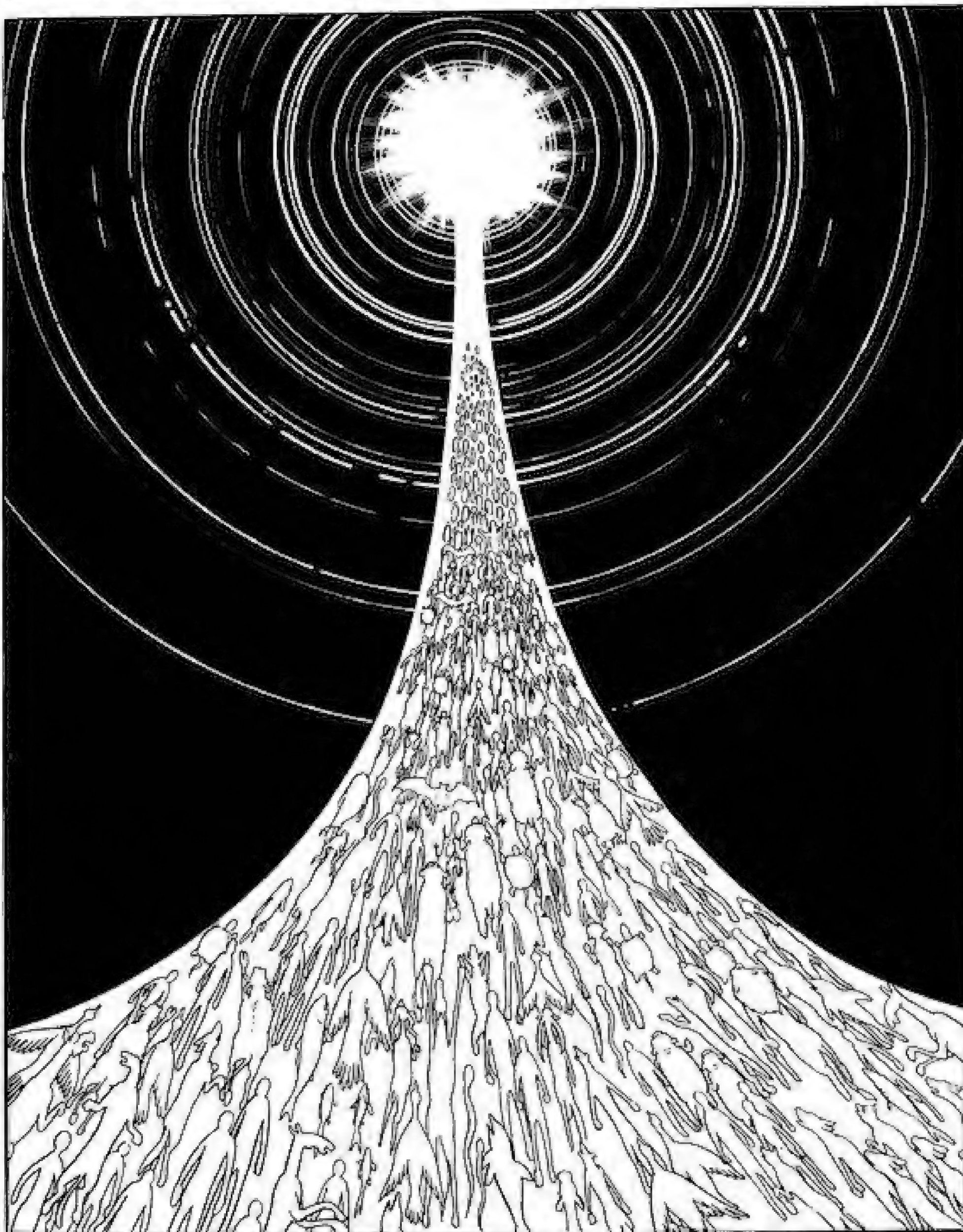




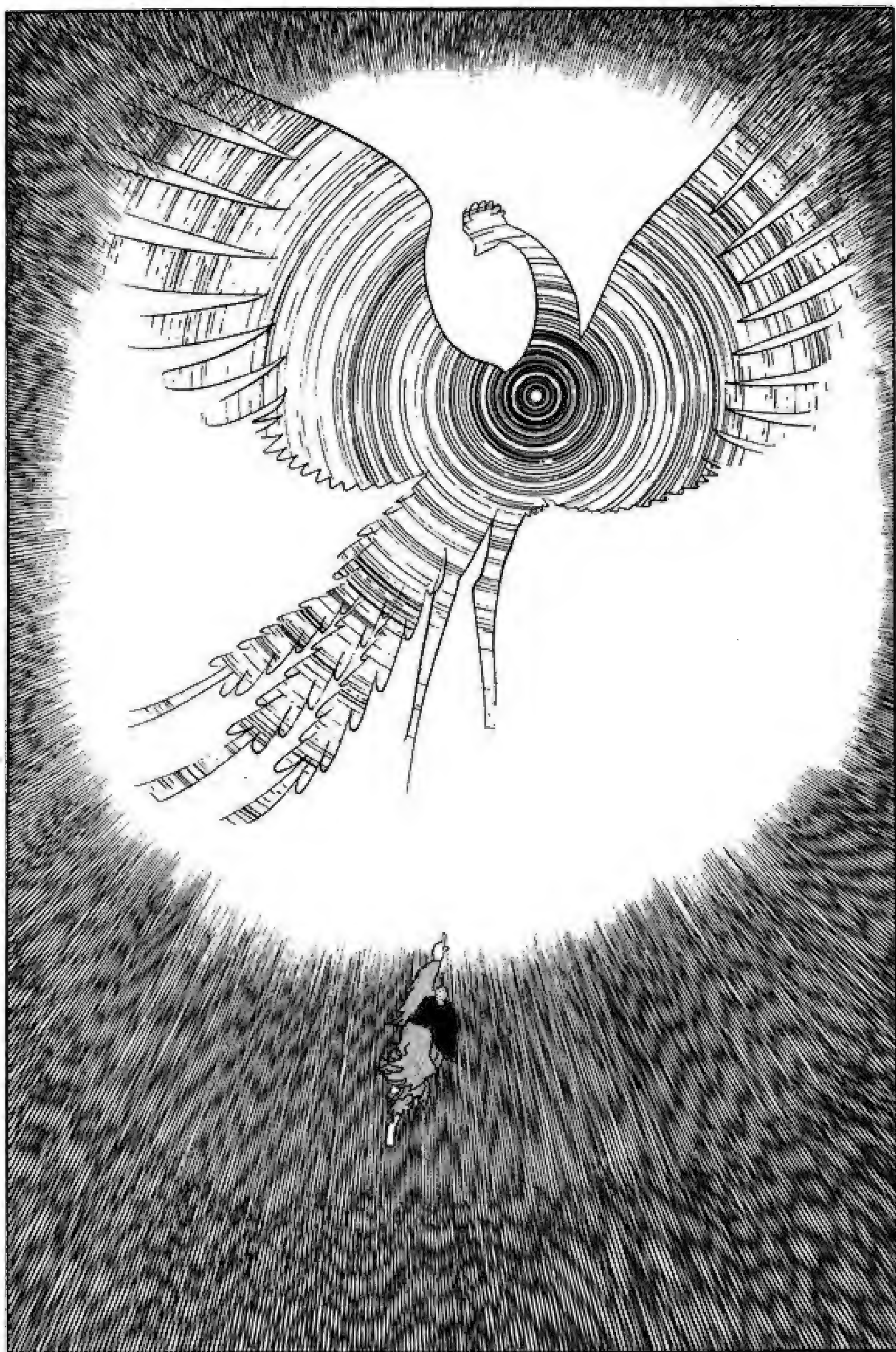
















LIFE?  
DEATH?  
IT'S ALL  
MEANING-  
LESS!!

WHA HA HA HA

WHA HA HA HA HA

HA HA HA HA

ALL THAT  
EXISTS IN  
THE COSMOS  
IS BUT  
**NON-**  
EXISTENCE!  
EVERYTHING  
IS NOTHING!

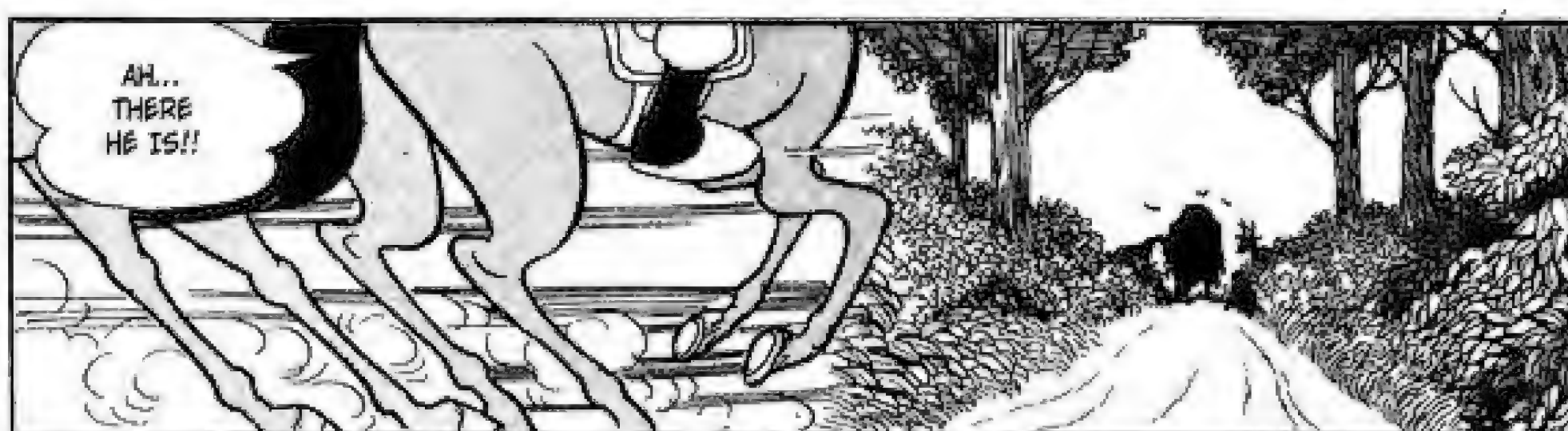




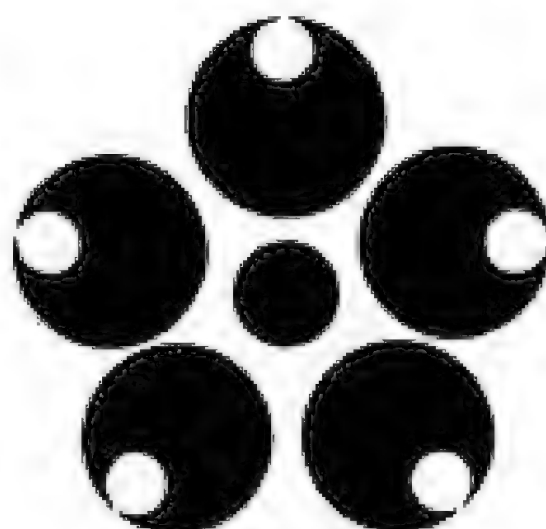




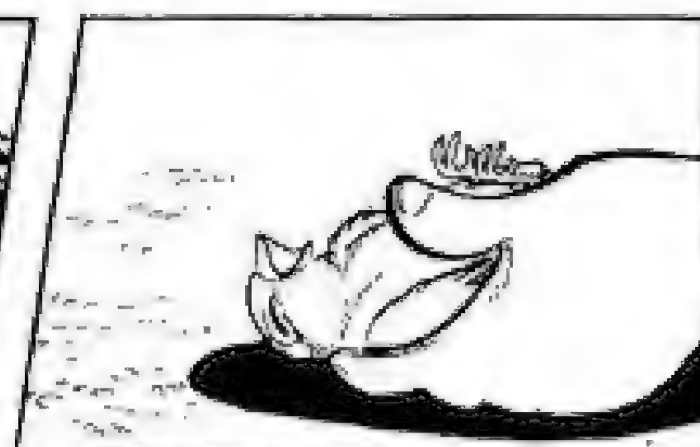




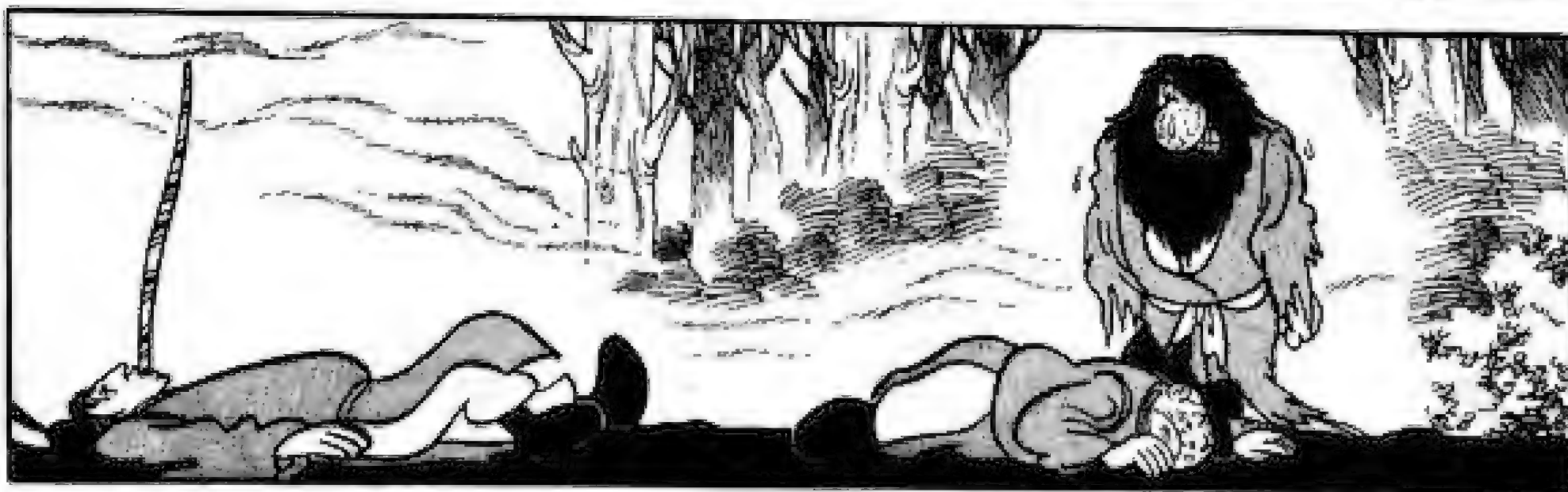




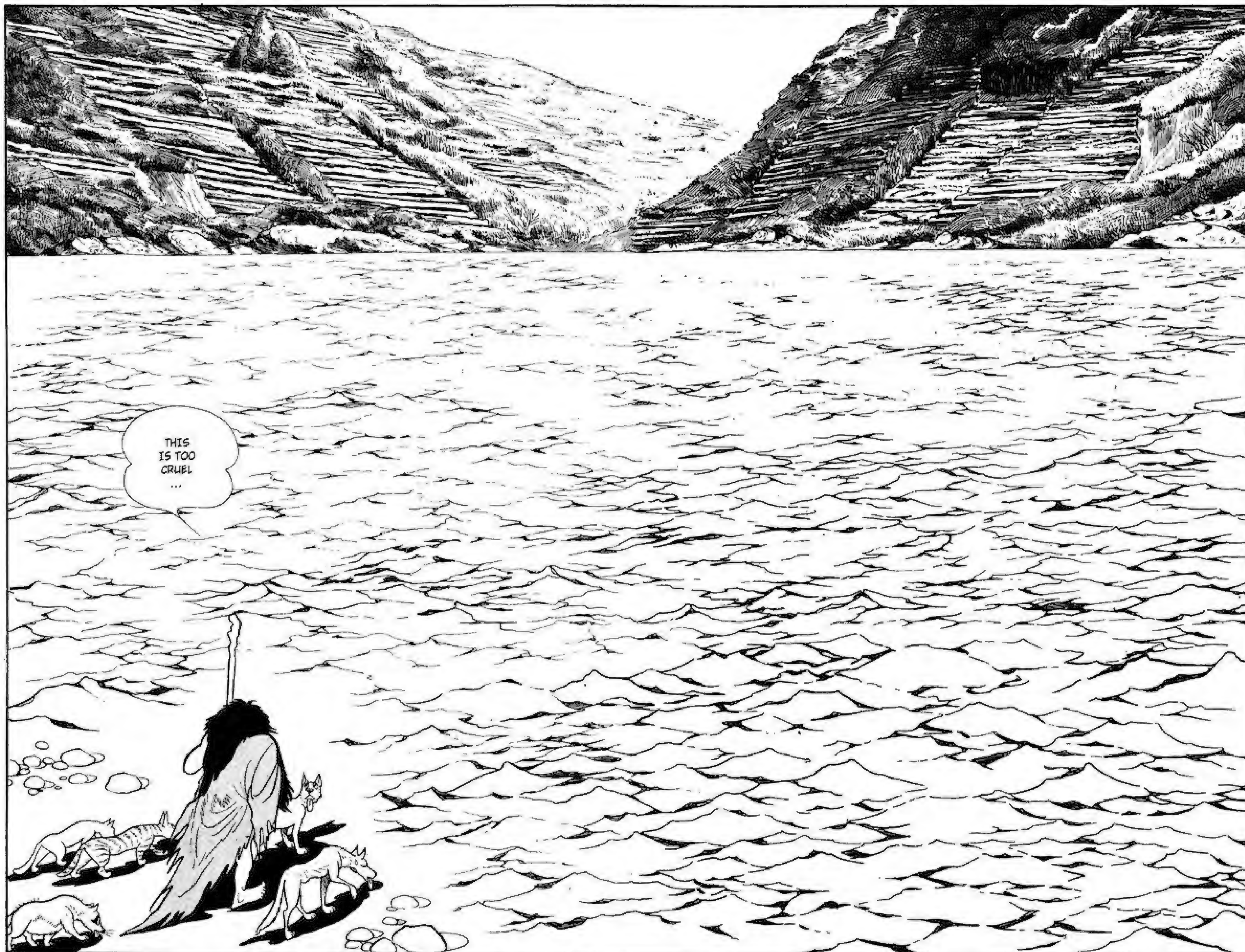




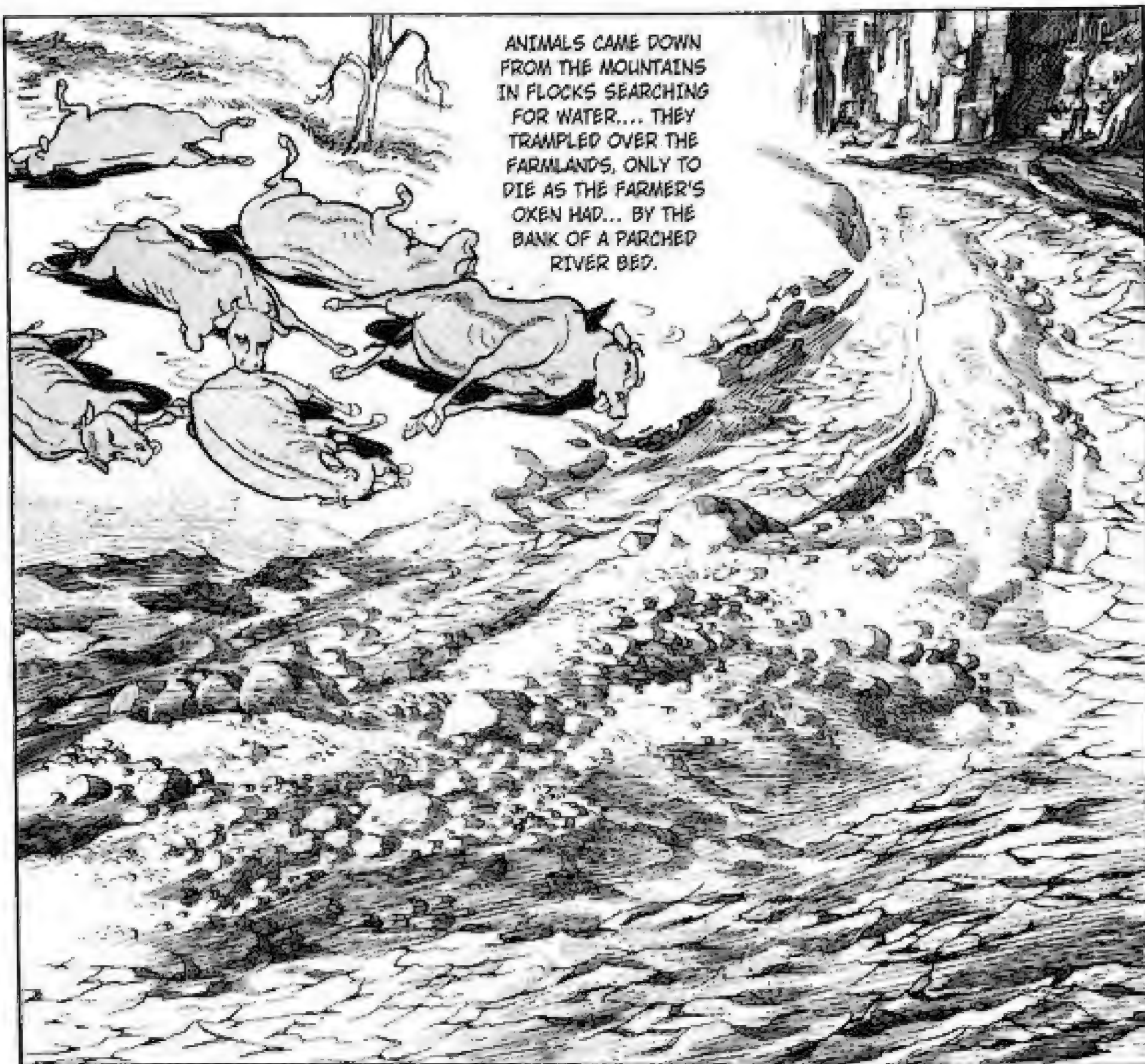




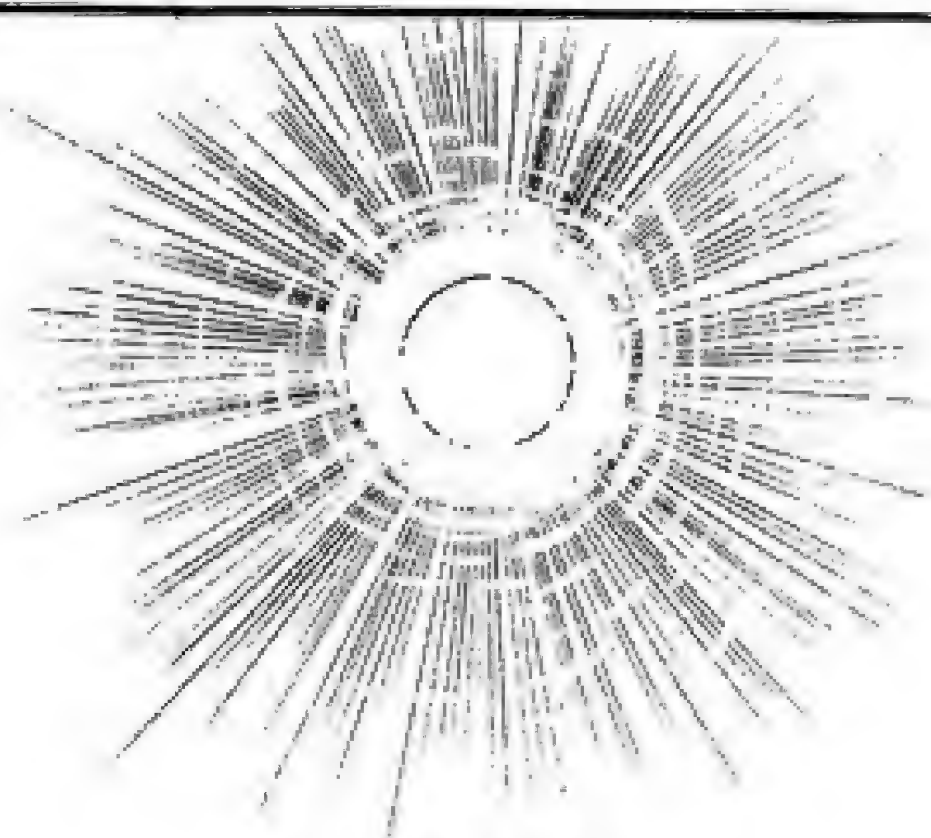












CONSTRUCTION  
CONTINUED IN SPITE  
OF THE DROUGHT,  
AND ALTHOUGH WORKERS  
DIED IN HUGE NUMBERS  
FROM AN OUTBREAK OF  
THE PLAGUE, THE HALL  
HOUSING THE GIANT  
BUDDHA MIRACULOUSLY  
APPROACHED COMPLETION.



SIR, COME  
QUICKLY!  
SOMETHING  
STRANGE  
HAS  
HAPPENED!



IT'S A BAD  
OMEN! THE  
WORKERS  
ARE SCARED!

WHAT  
ARE  
YOU  
TALKING  
ABOUT  
?



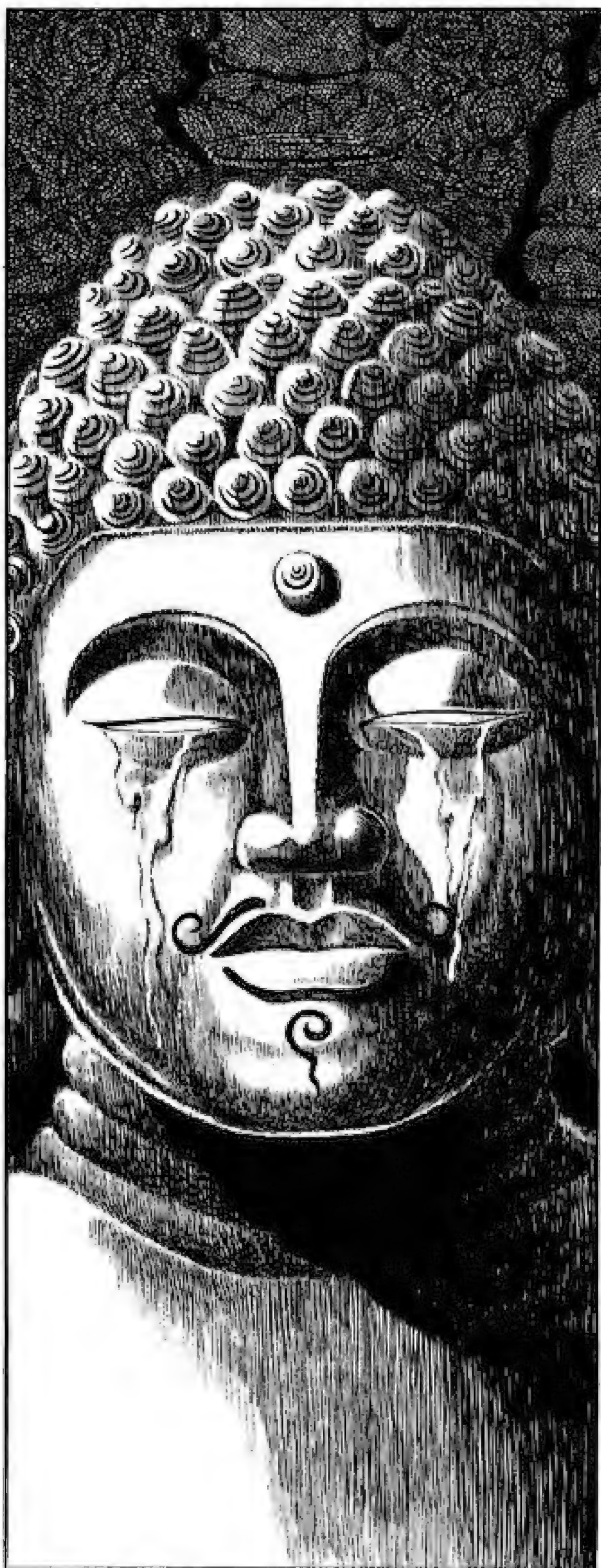
BUT THAT'S  
IMPOSSIBLE  
...  
IN THIS  
DROUGHT?

IT'S  
TRUE!  
...LOOK  
FOR  
YOUR-  
SELF!





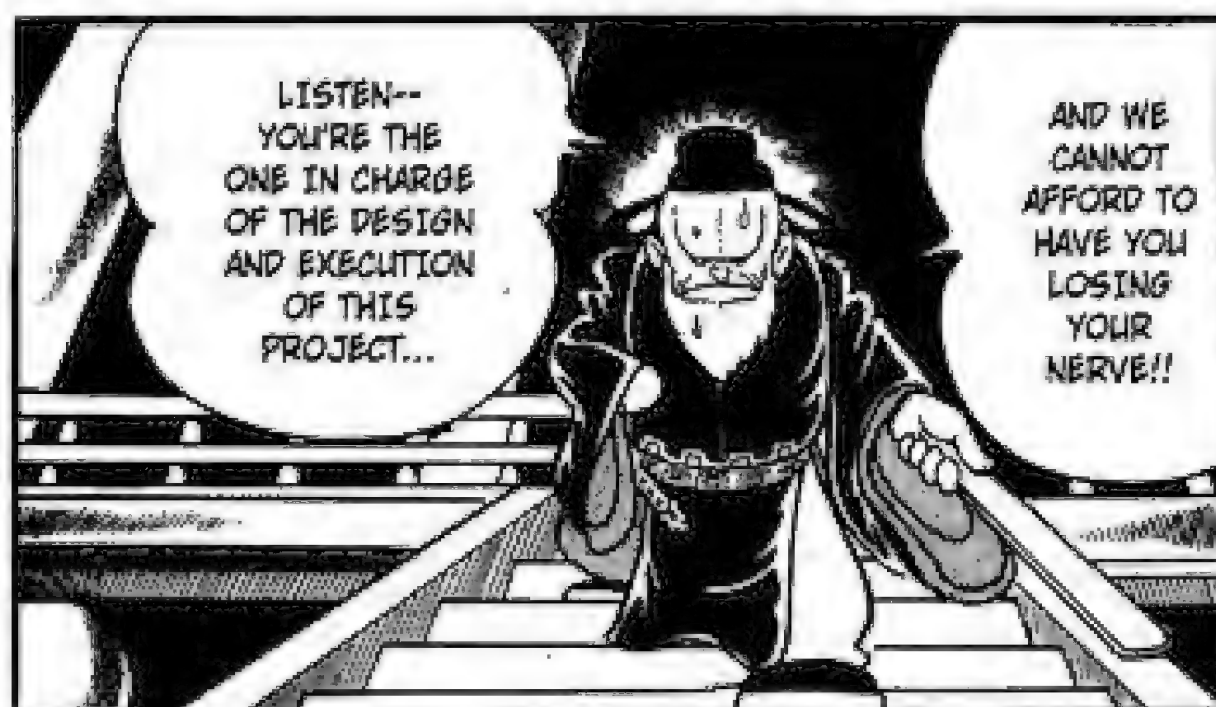




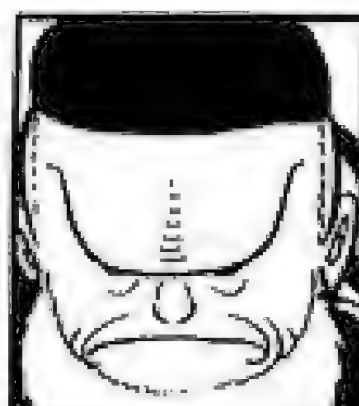
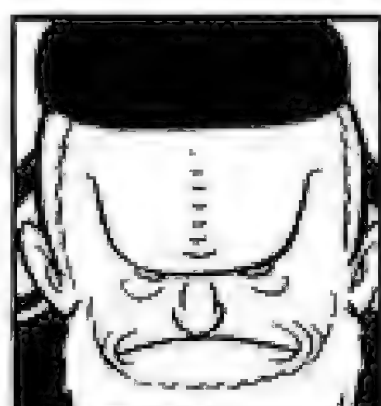
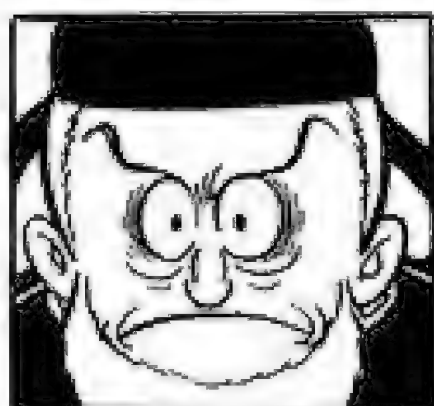
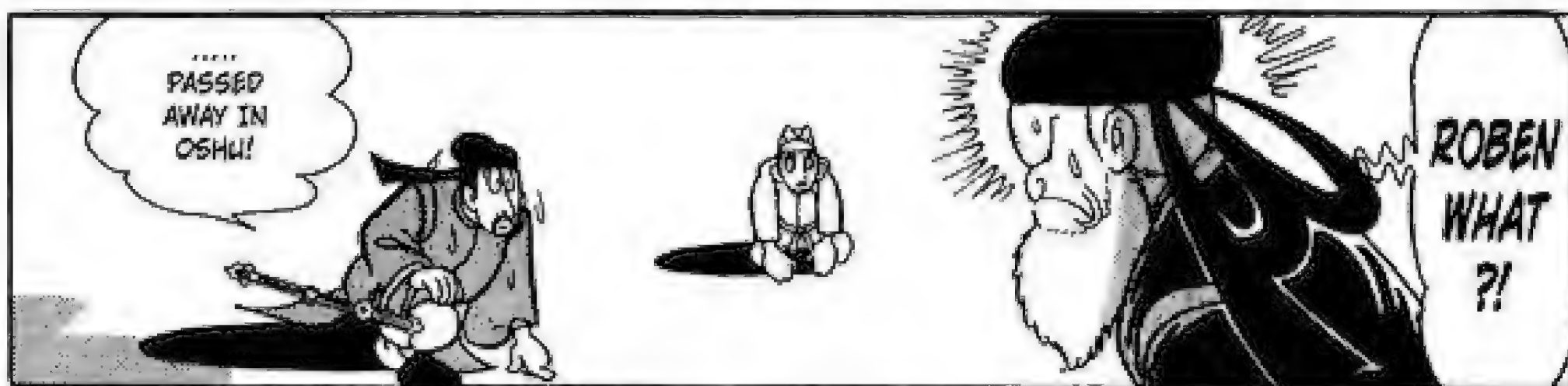
AS THE PROJECT NEARED COMPLETION, CONSTRUCTION PROCEEDED THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT WITHOUT REGARD FOR SLEEP OR REST OF THE WORKERS. SMALL FIRES THEY LIT IN THE HALL FOR ILLUMINATION CAUSED AN UPDRAFT, AND THE ACCOMPANYING WATER VAPOR CONDENSED ON THE BROAD FOREHEAD OF THE BUDDHA. AT NIGHT THIS MOISTURE COLLECTED ON THE EYELIDS OF THE STATUE AND THEN, OVERFLOWING, CAUSED MEN TO THINK THE BUDDHA WAS WEeping.







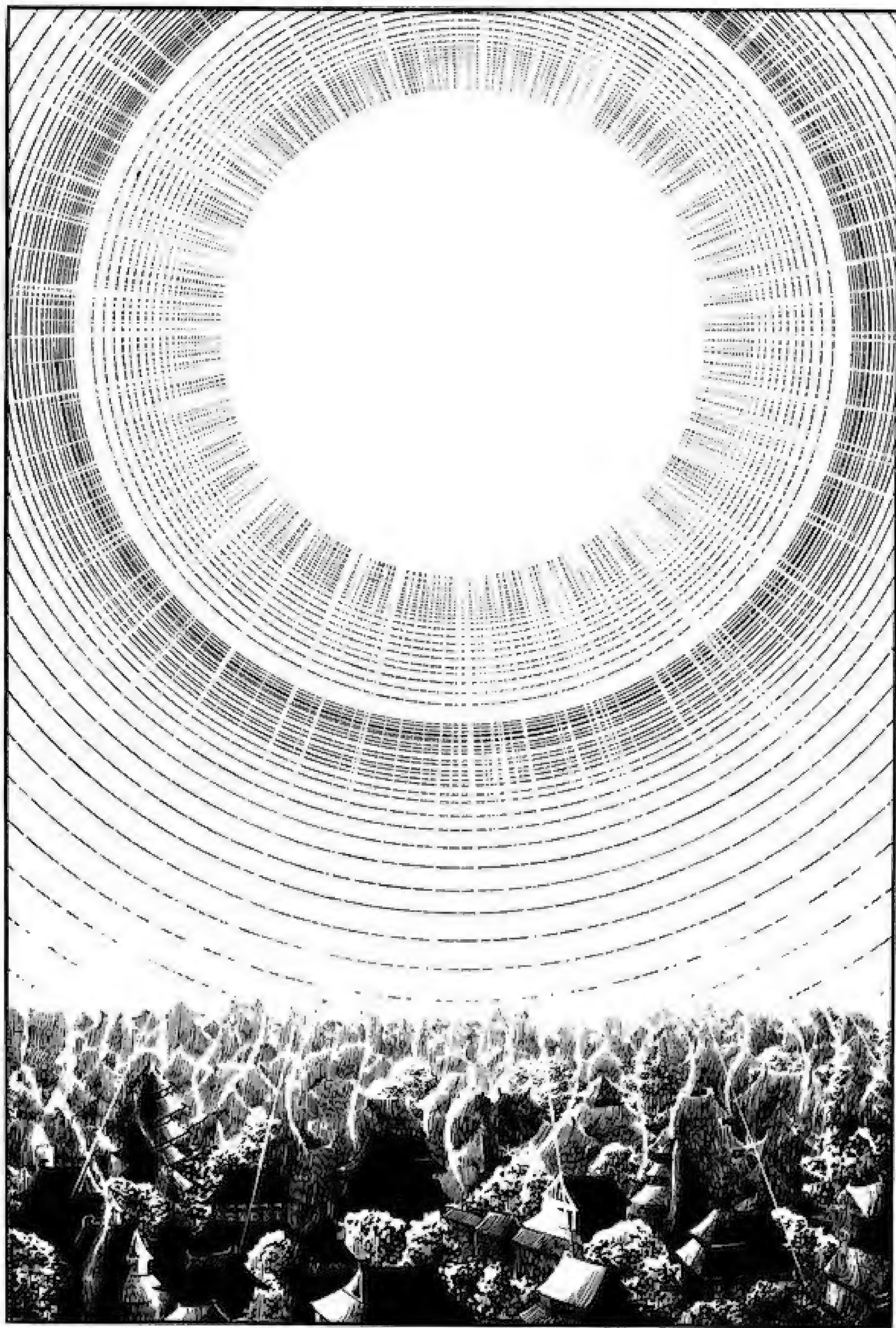




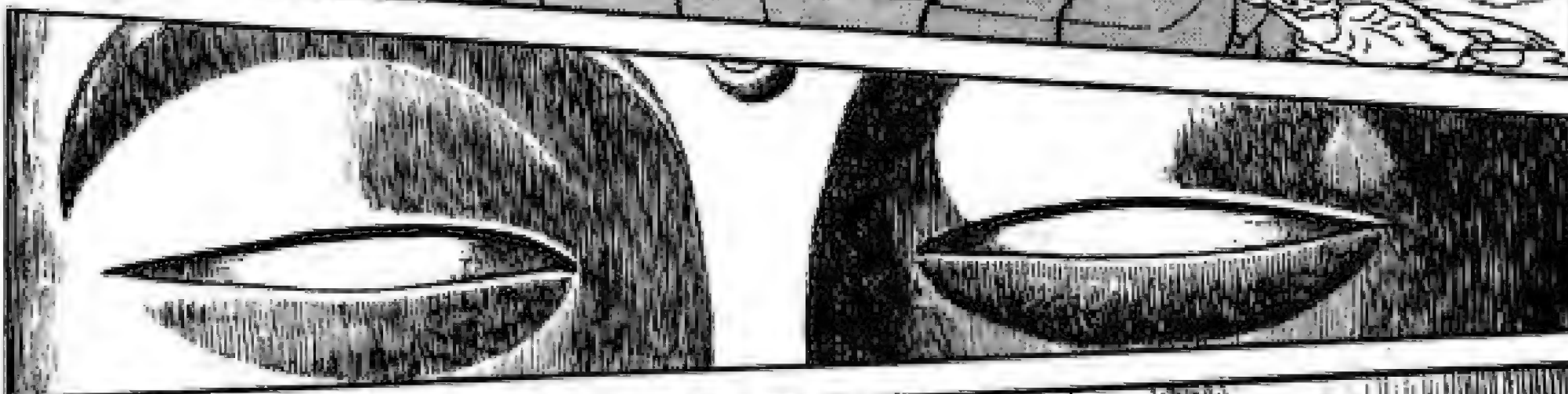
















SIRE ...



LORD  
TACHIBANA  
WISHES YOU  
TO COME TO  
HIS ESTATE...

LORD  
TACHI-  
BANA  
?!  
!!



WHAT  
DOES  
HE  
WANT  
OF ME ?

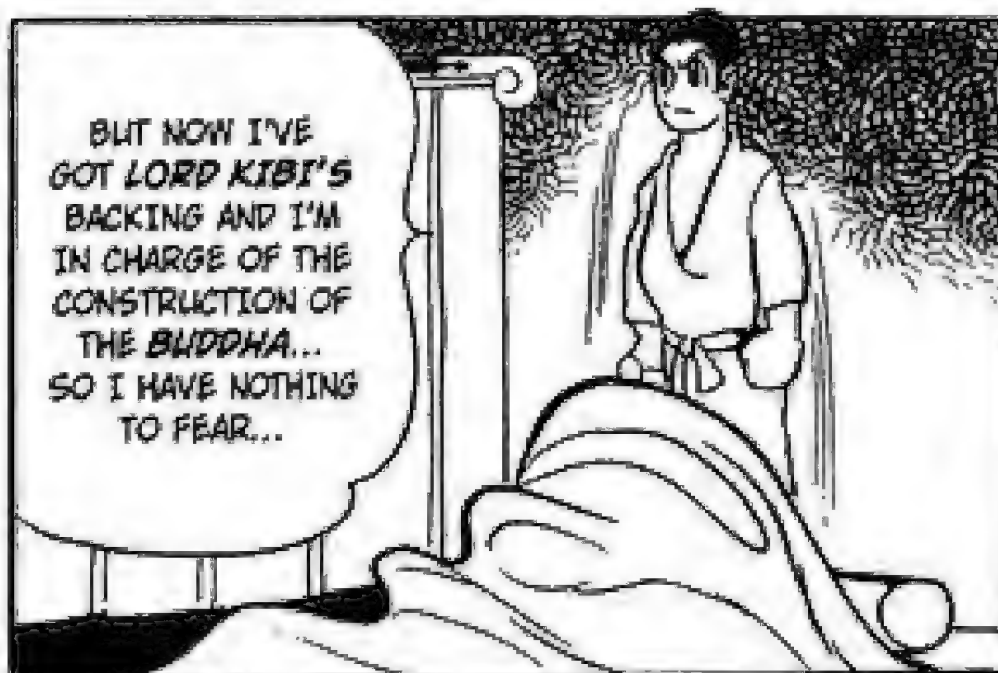


HE'S  
MY  
ENEMY !

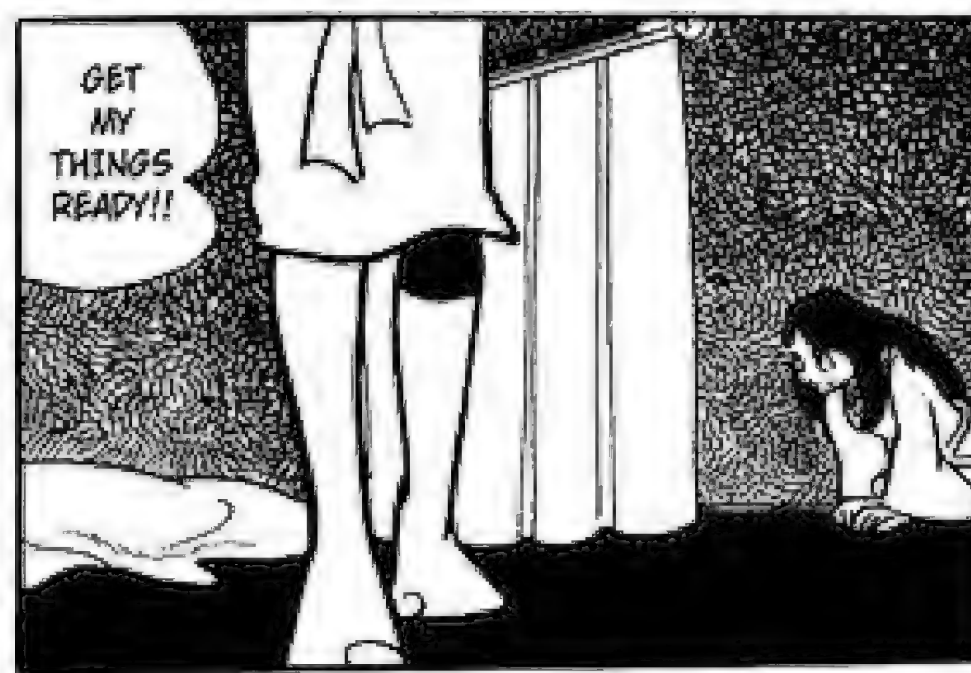
AND  
I'M  
SURE  
HE  
HATES  
ME  
TOO  
....



...  
THIS  
MUST  
BE A  
TRAP  
!!



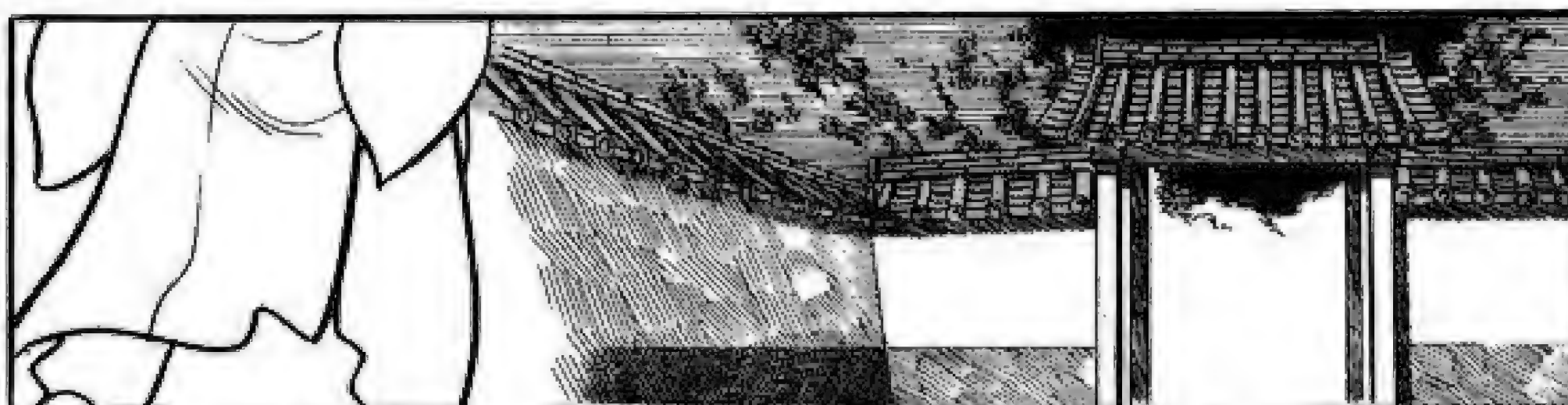
BUT NOW I'VE  
GOT LORD KIBI'S  
BACKING AND I'M  
IN CHARGE OF THE  
CONSTRUCTION OF  
THE BUDDHA...  
SO I HAVE NOTHING  
TO FEAR...



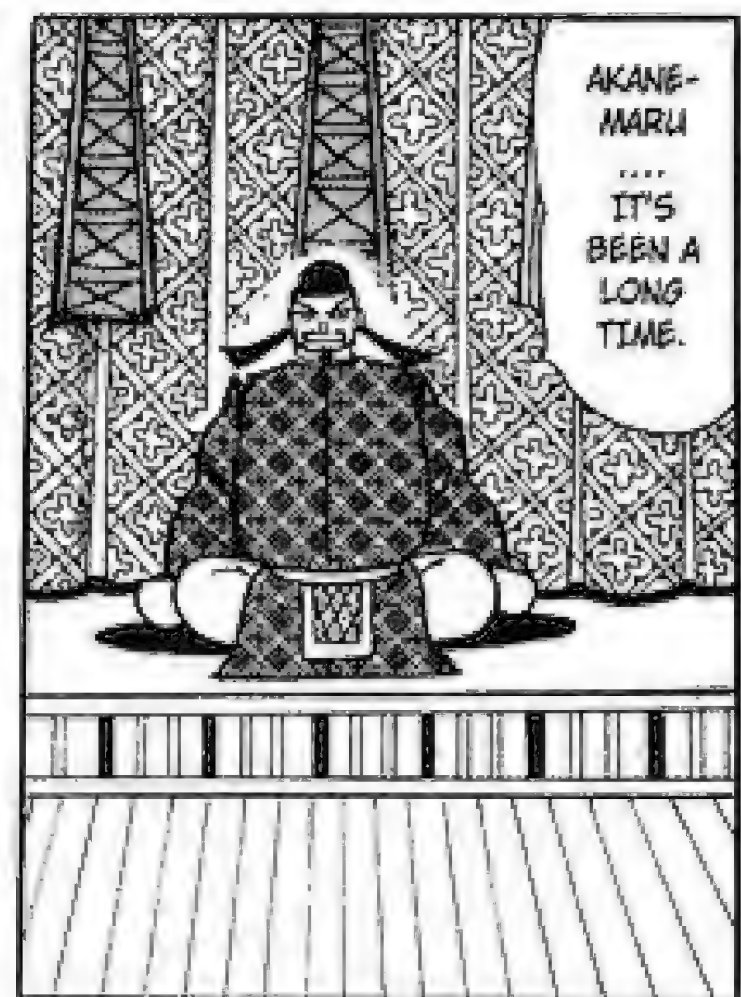
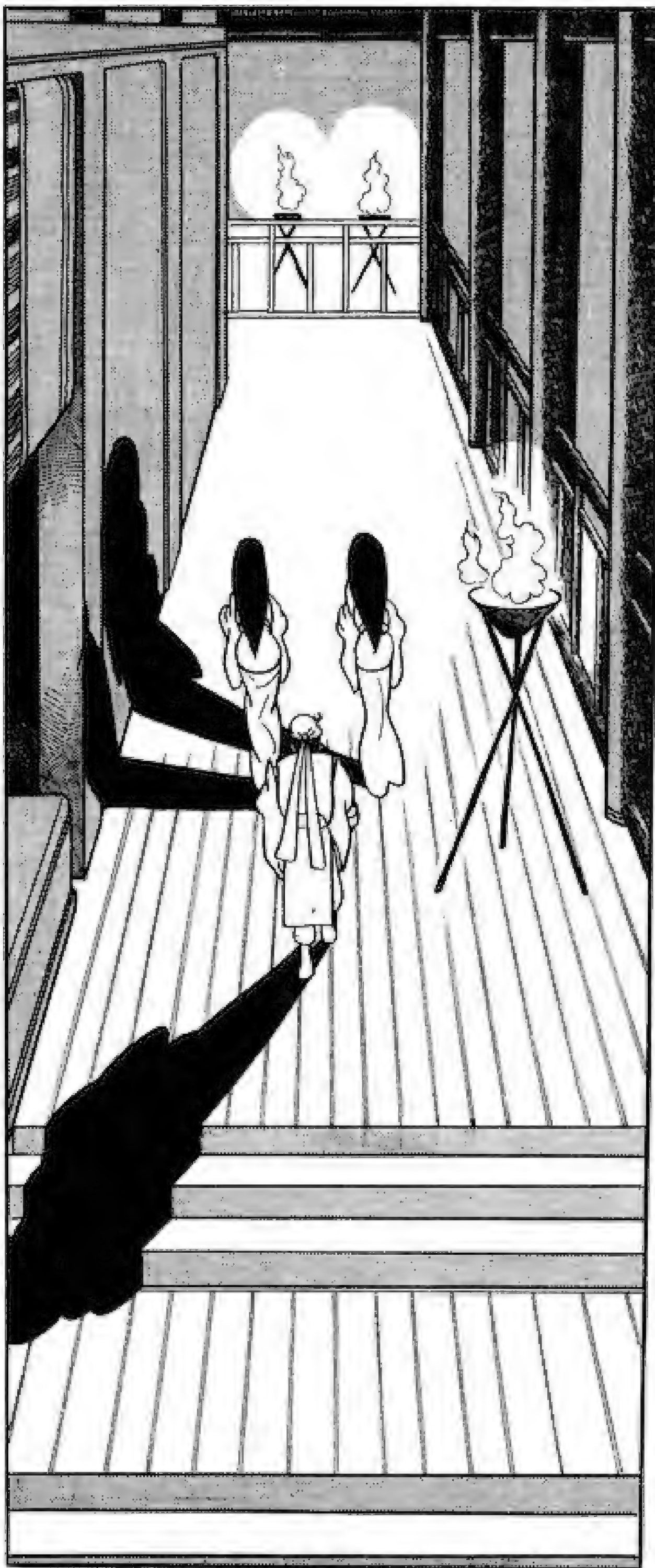
GET  
MY  
THINGS  
READY!!



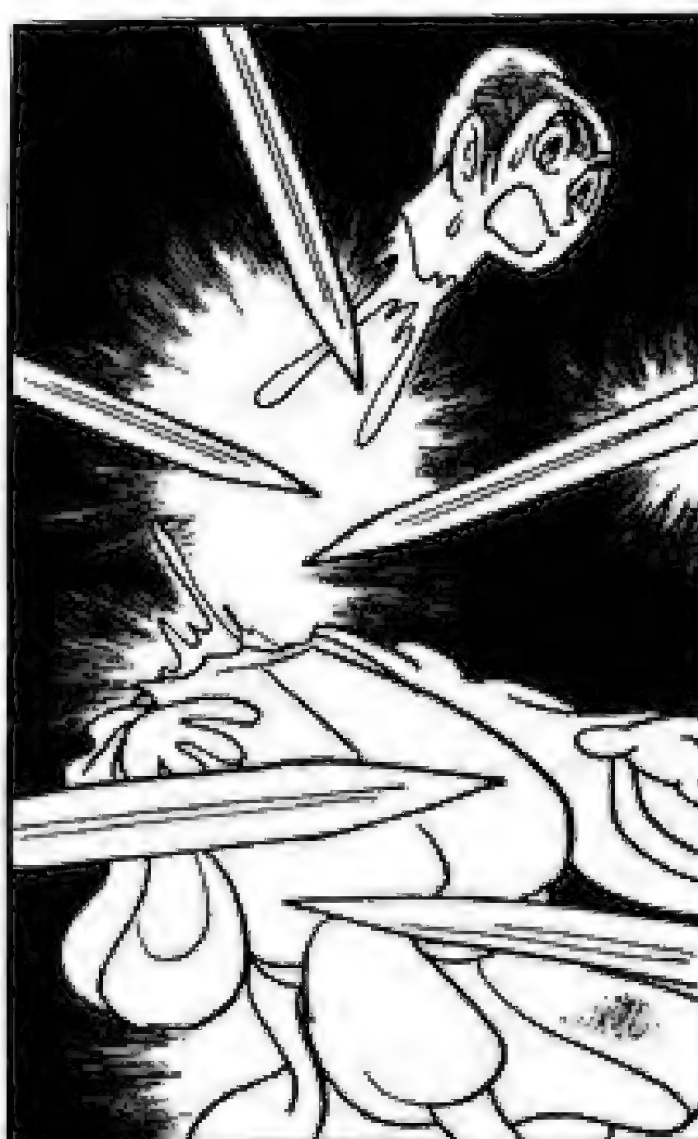
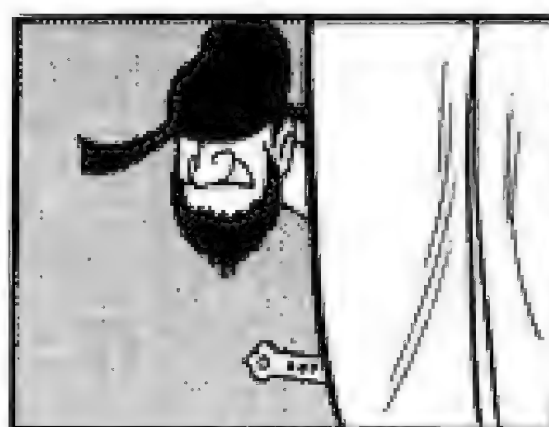
IF HE INTENDS  
TO HARM ME, LET  
HIM TRY! I'VE GOT  
PLENTY OF SUPPORT  
BEHIND ME!!



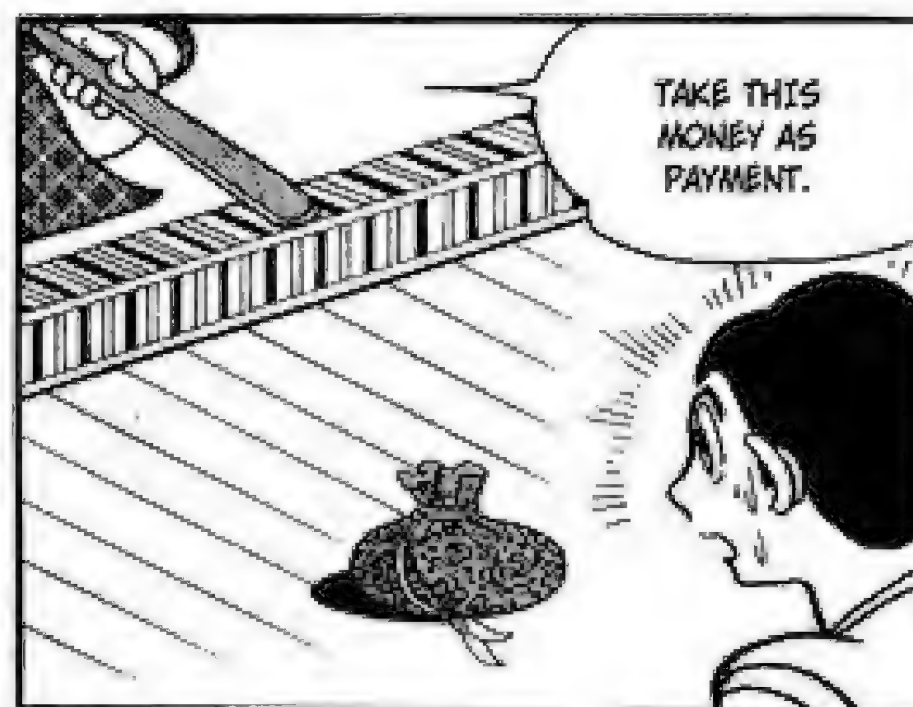
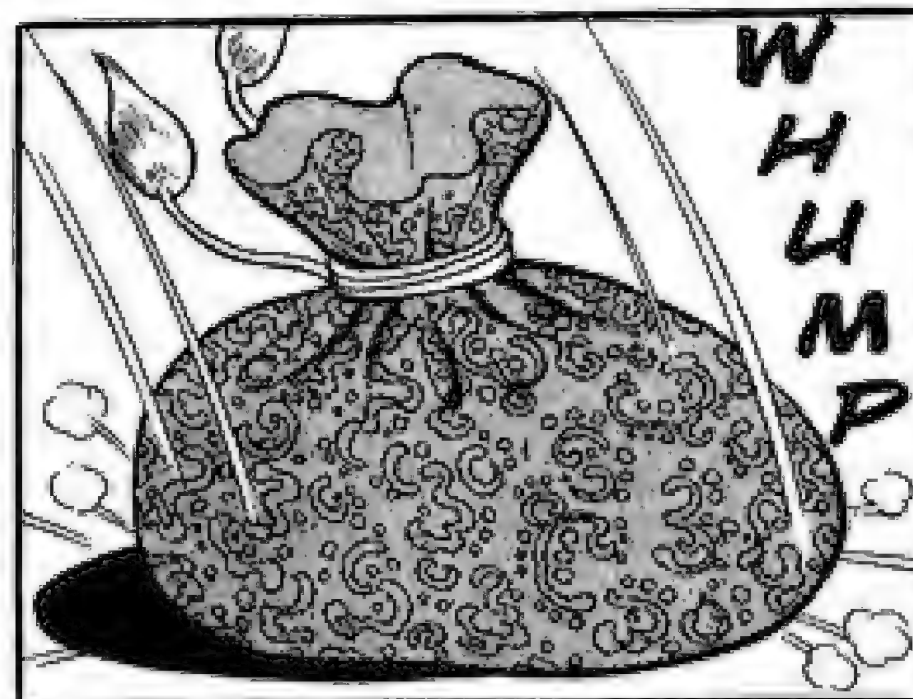
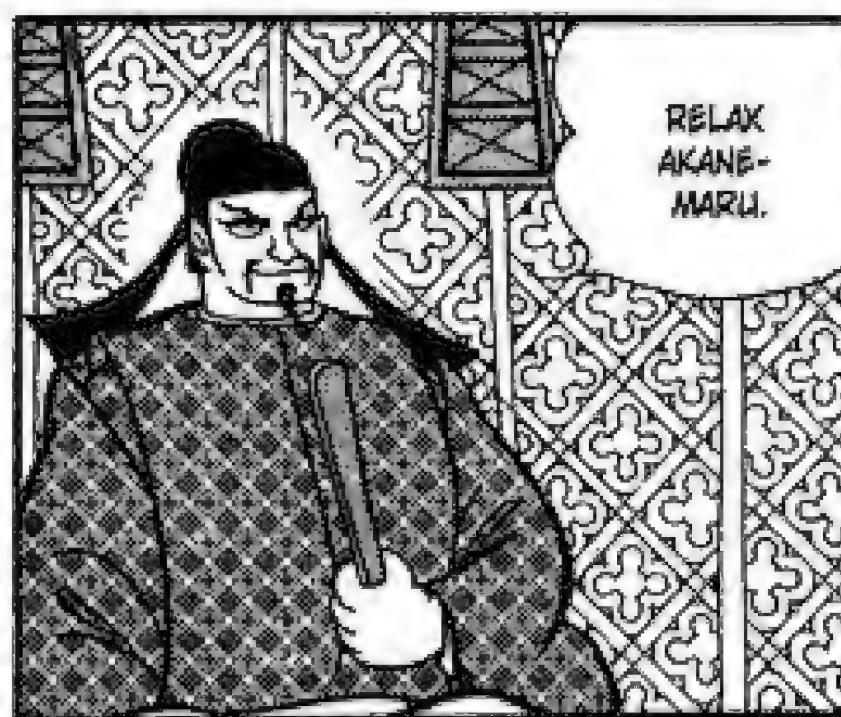




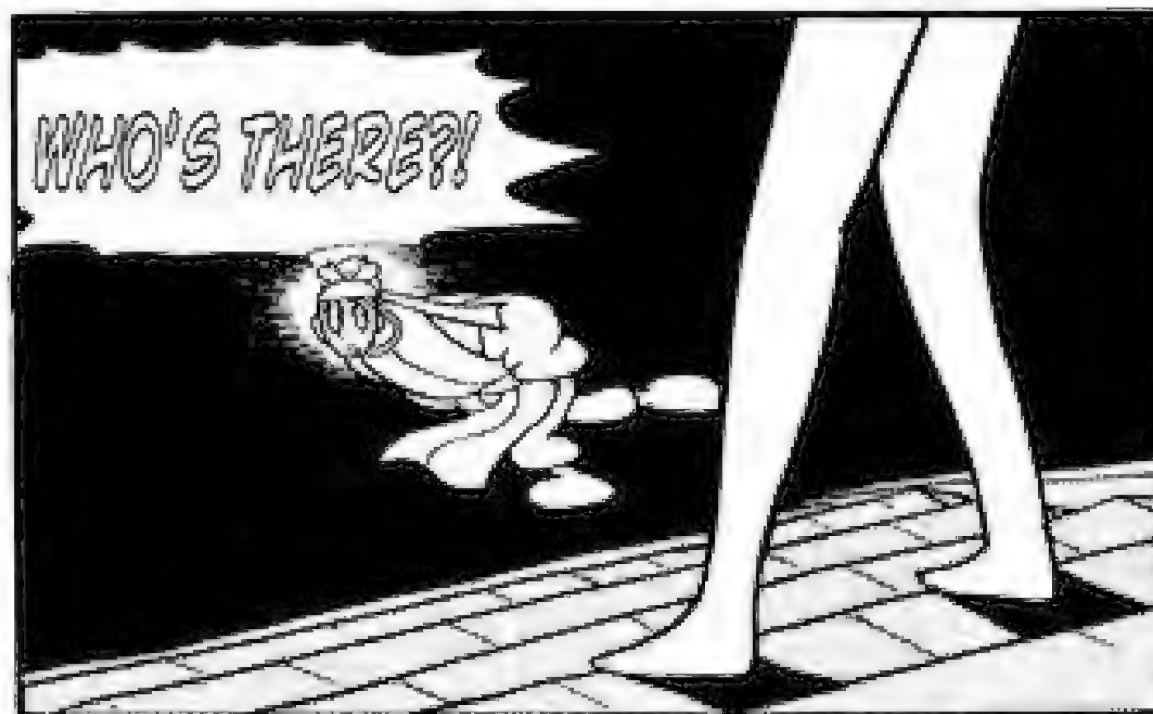
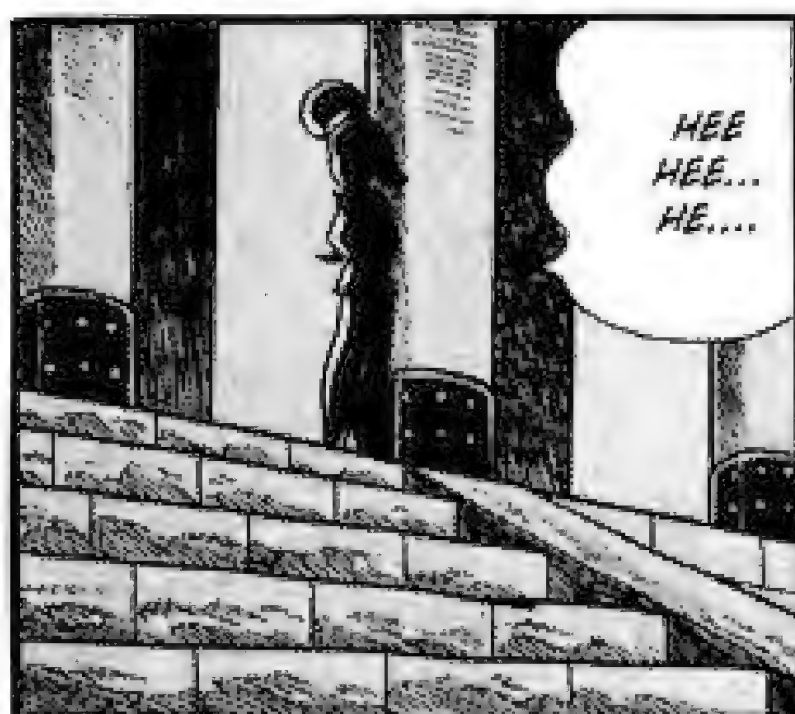




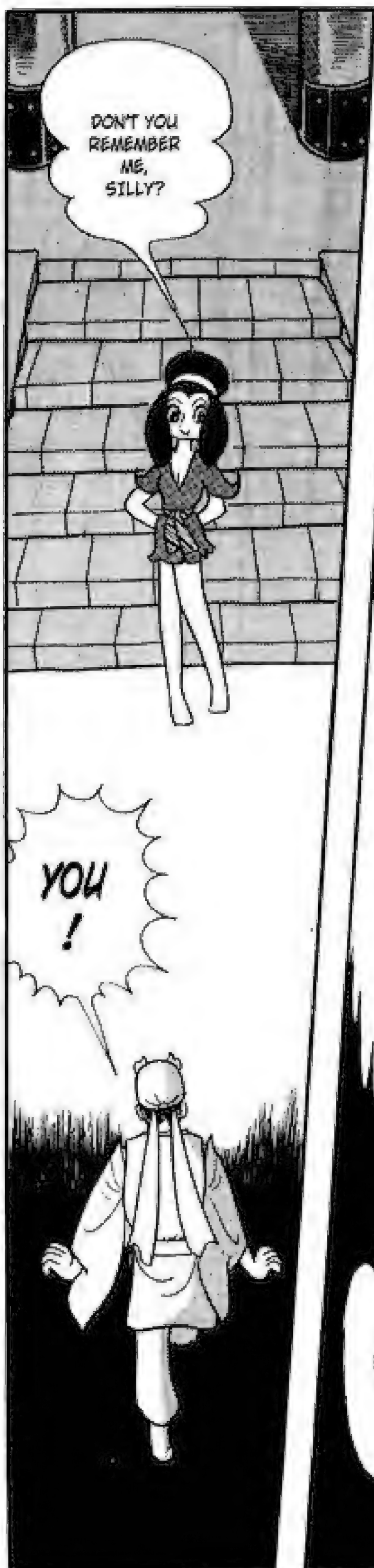




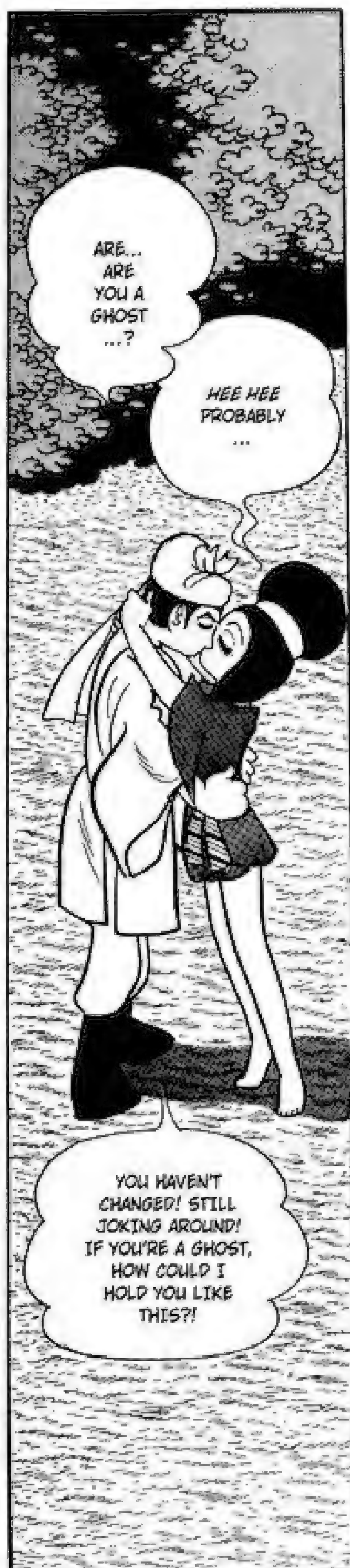




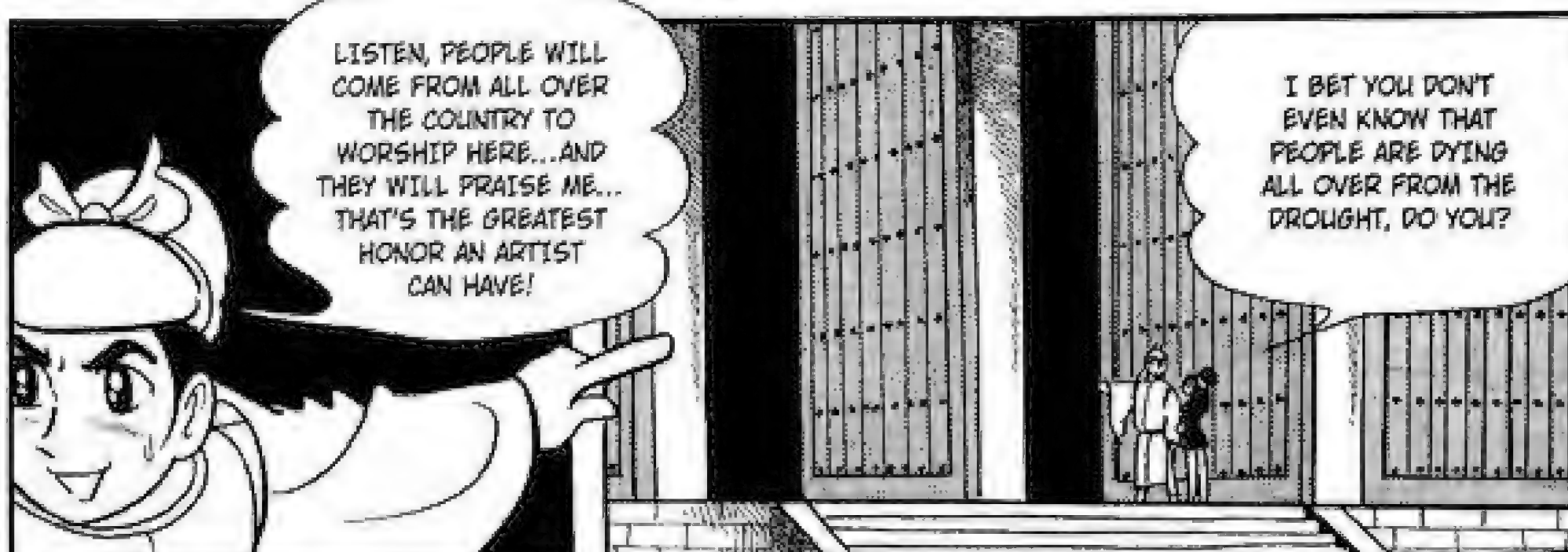
















THAT'S  
NONE  
OF MY  
CONCERN  
!

I JUST WANT TO  
TRY MY SKILL ON  
SOMETHING  
BIG!!

BUT MAKING  
SOMETHING  
LIKE THIS ISN'T  
GOING TO  
STOP THE  
DROUGHT!  
...

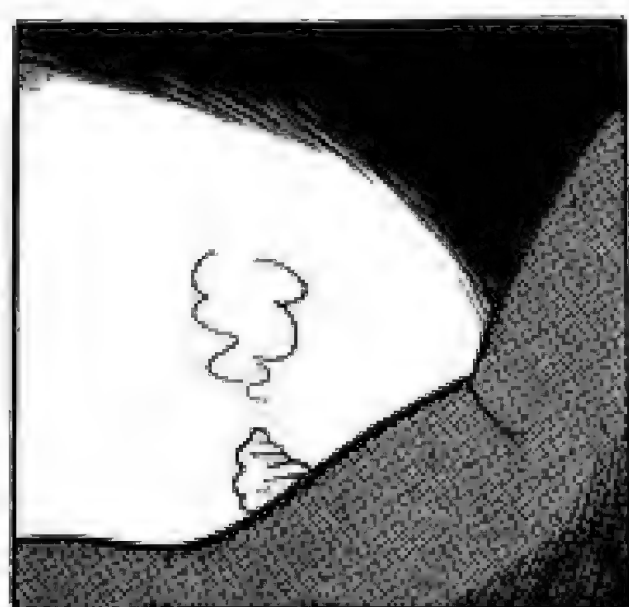
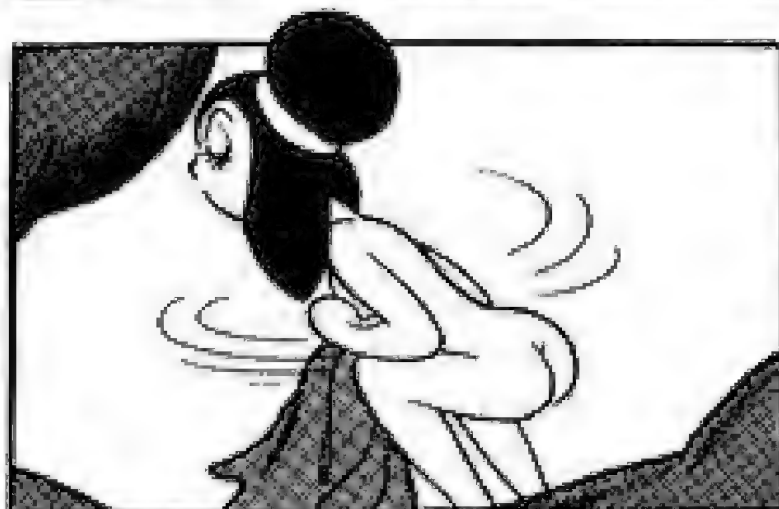




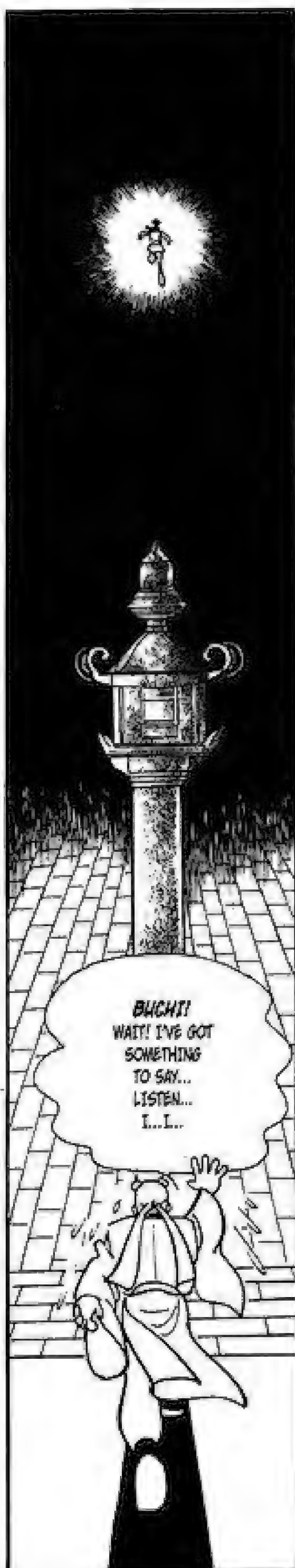
I'LL SHOW  
YOU HOW  
MPORTANT  
THIS BUDDHA  
IS!

BUCHI!  
STOP!  
WHAT  
ARE YOU  
DOING?!









BUCHI!  
WAIT! I'VE GOT  
SOMETHING  
TO SAY...  
LISTEN...  
I...I...



I...  
I...  
LOVE  
YOU  
BUCHI  
...



WHEN THE  
BUDDHA WAS  
FINALLY  
COMPLETED  
ITS VERY  
SIZE SEEMED TO  
SYMBOLIZE  
OPPRESSION OF  
THE PEOPLE.

A GREAT  
CELEBRATION  
TO PAINT IN THE  
EYES OF THE  
BUDDHA WAS  
HELD WITH  
THOUSANDS OF  
PRIESTS, SCHOLARS,  
AND ARISTOCRATS  
GATHERING FROM  
ALL PARTS OF  
THE COUNTRY.

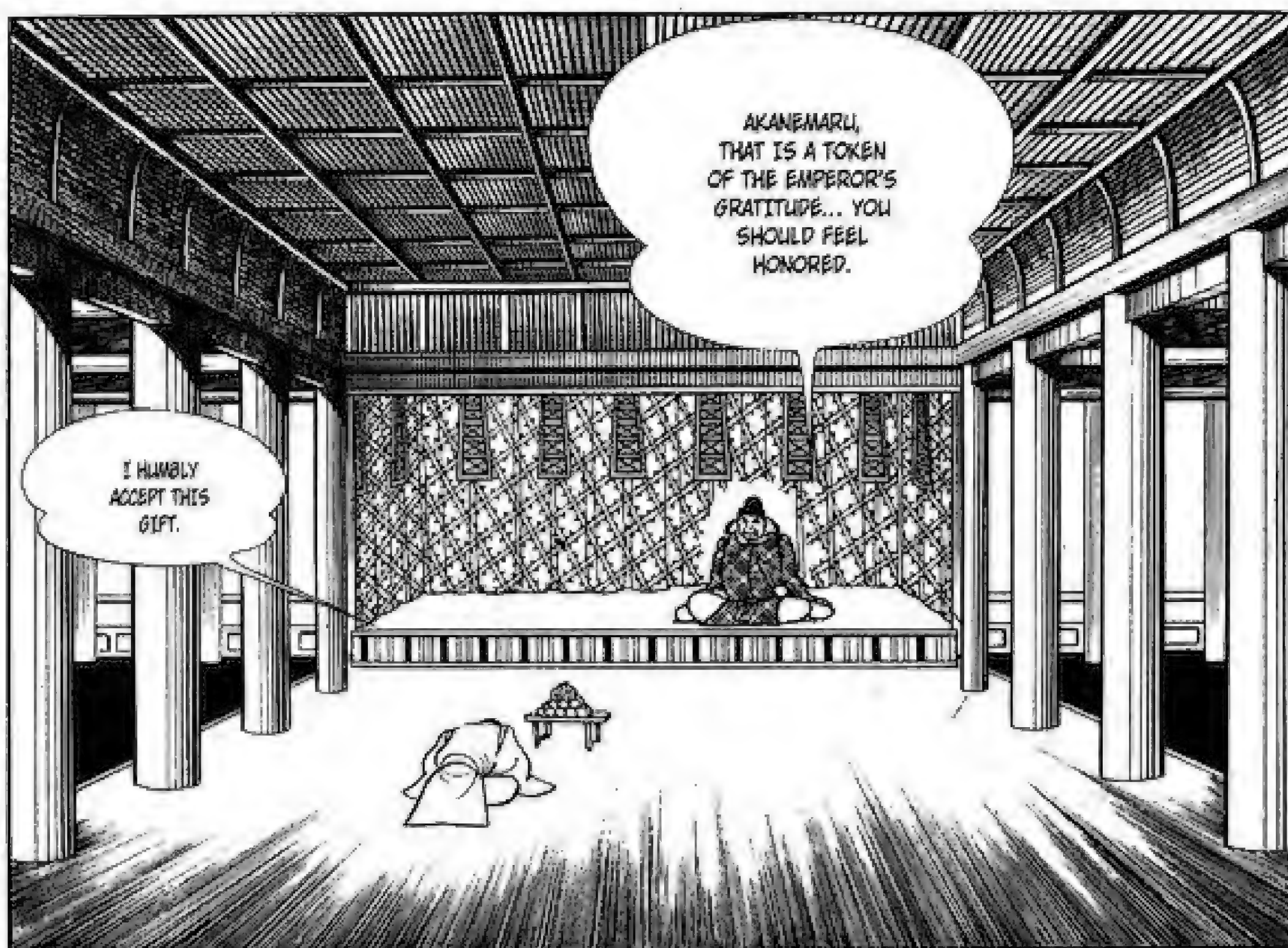


THE CAPITAL  
OF NARA  
FLOURISHED  
AND BLOSSOMED  
FORTH LIKE  
A FLOWER...

THE CULTURAL PROGRESS OF NARA, THE  
ANCIENT CAPITAL OF JAPAN, WAS HEAVILY  
INFLUENCED BY BUDDHISM. THE EMPEROR,  
ARISTOCRATS, WEALTHY NOTABLES, AND  
SCHOLARS.... EVEN THE NATIVE SHINTO  
PRIESTS...ALL COOPERATED IN THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST CULTURE, AN  
EXAMPLE OF WHICH IS TODAIJI AND ITS  
GIANT BUDDHA STATUE. BUT IT SHOULD NOT  
BE FORGOTTEN THAT THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
SUCH A MONUMENTAL WORK INVOLVED THE  
USE OF PEOPLE IN CONDITIONS NEAR SLAVERY  
AND THAT AT THE TIME THE LAND WAS IN  
CONSTANT POLITICAL TURMOIL.











YOUR LORDSHIP  
SURELY SPEAKS IN  
JEST. WHY DO YOU  
CALL HIM THE BEST?

....BECAUSE HIS  
WORKS HAVE A  
STRANGE SPIRITUAL  
POWER, AND PEOPLE  
SAY THEY ARE CAPABLE  
OF CURING ANY  
SICKNESS.



WHO  
IS THIS  
MAN?!

GAO  
....



WELL, WHAT  
DO YOU SAY?  
THINK YOU'RE  
BETTER?

SHOULD HE  
COME HERE WE  
WOULD SOON  
FIND OUT WHO  
THE BEST  
MAN IS....



WELL,  
SHALL I  
HAVE HIM COME  
AND TRY HIS  
HAND?

YOUR  
LORDSHIP!  
ALLOW ME TO  
TEST MY SKILLS  
AGAINST  
HIS!

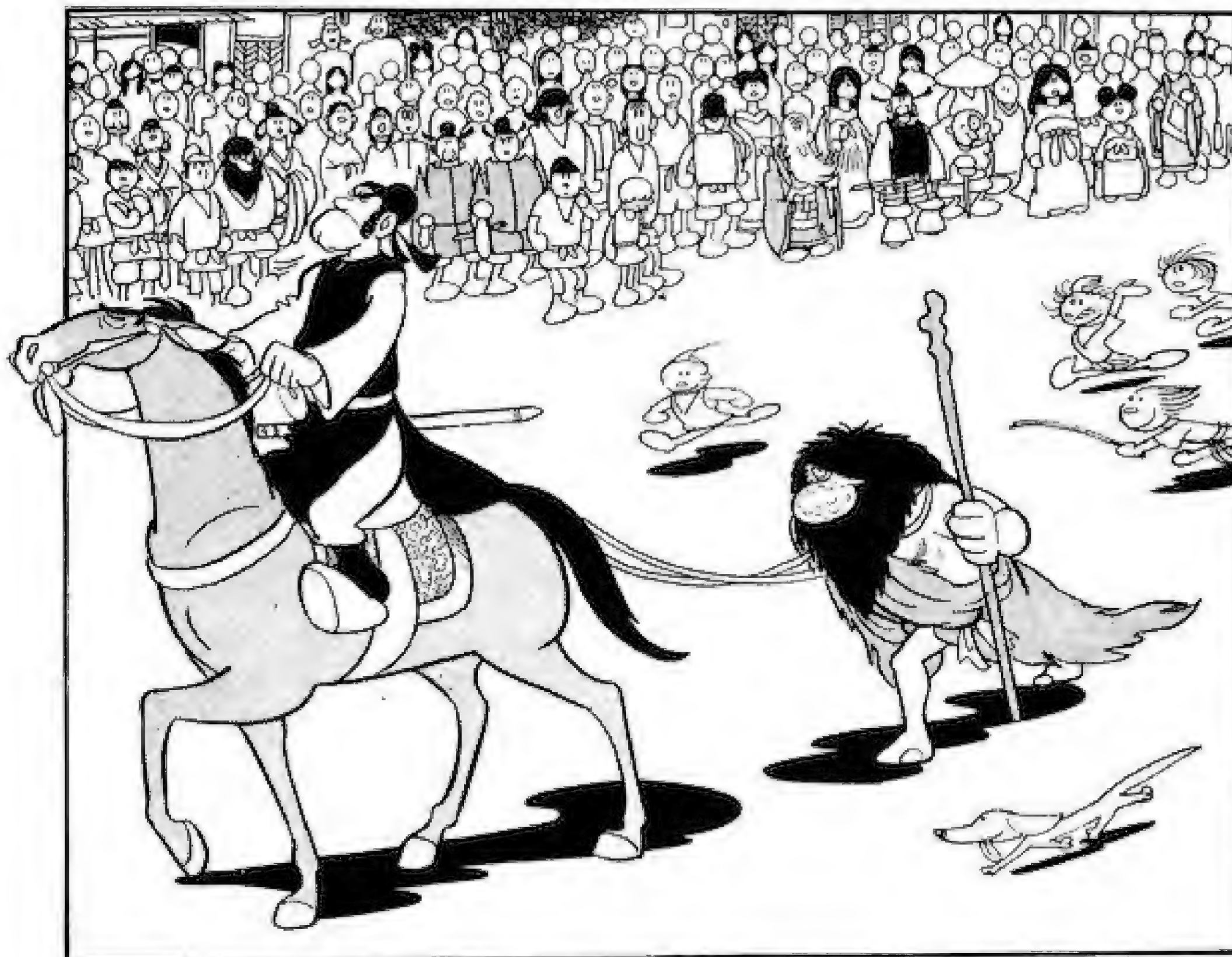
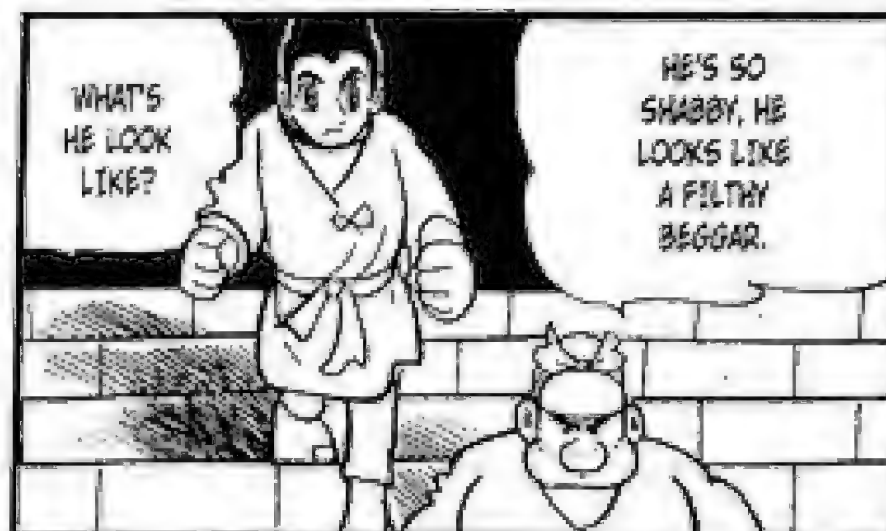


THEN I'LL SHOW  
YOU THAT HE IS  
AN UPSTART  
COUNTRY FOOL!!

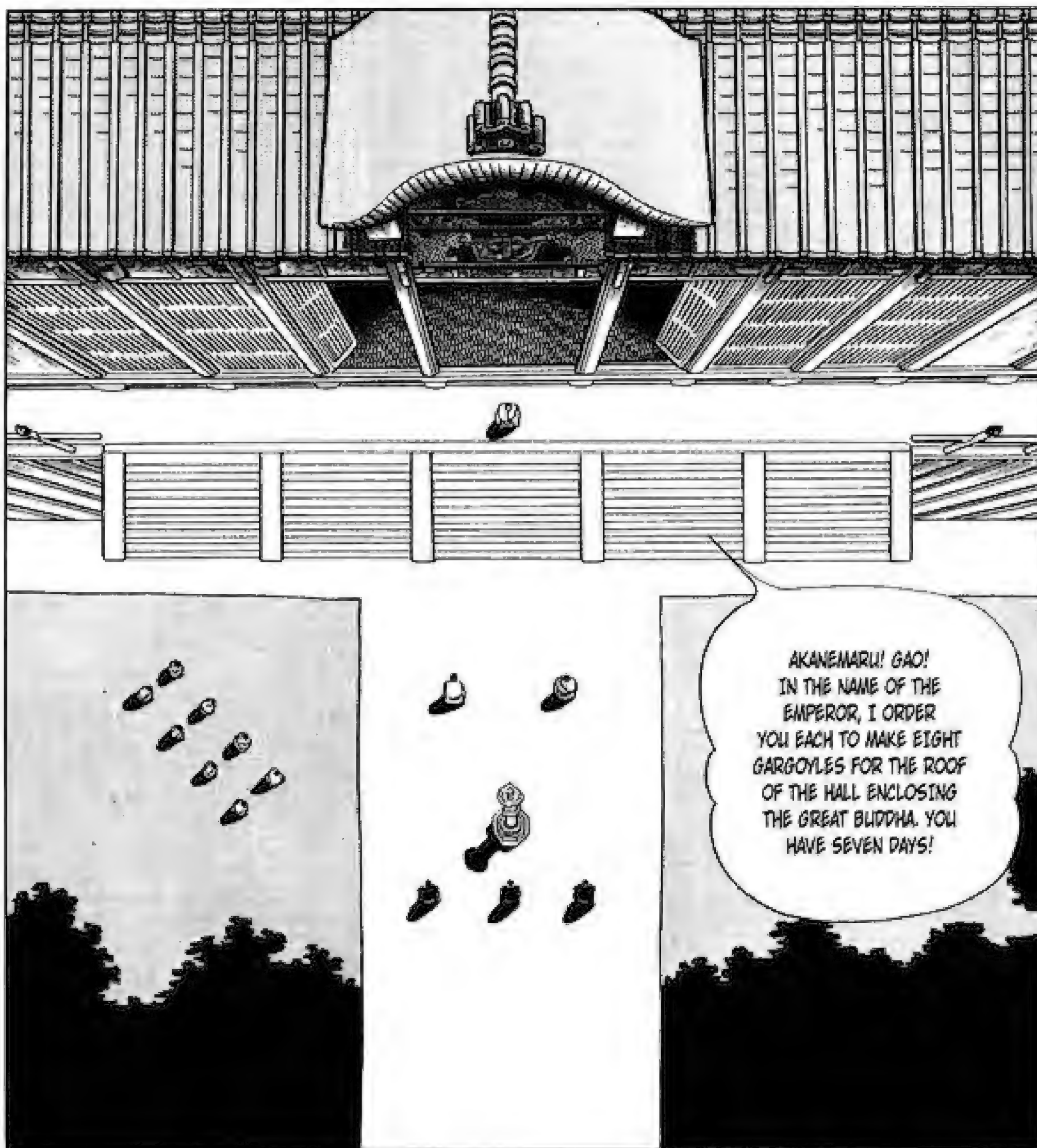


HMM...  
THIS  
WILL  
BE  
INTEREST-  
ING.









AKANEMARU! GAO!  
IN THE NAME OF THE  
EMPEROR, I ORDER  
YOU EACH TO MAKE EIGHT  
GARGOYLES FOR THE ROOF  
OF THE HALL ENCLOSING  
THE GREAT BUDDHA. YOU  
HAVE SEVEN DAYS!



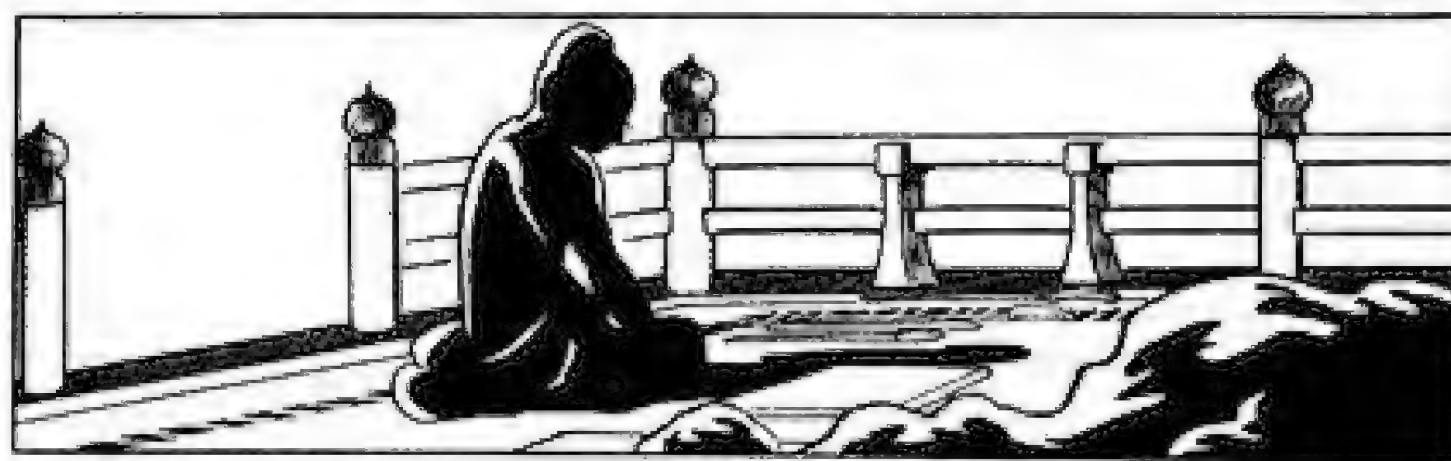
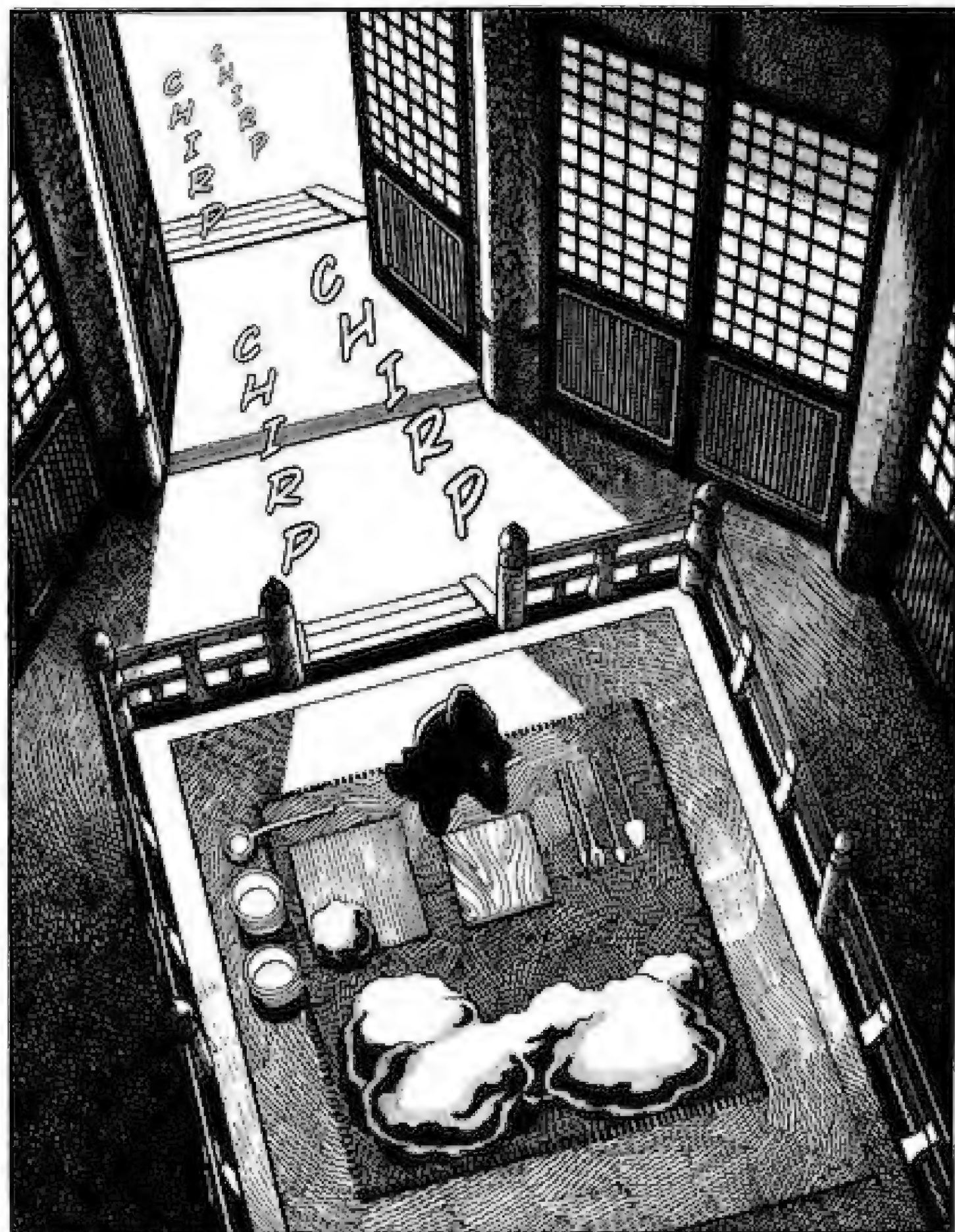
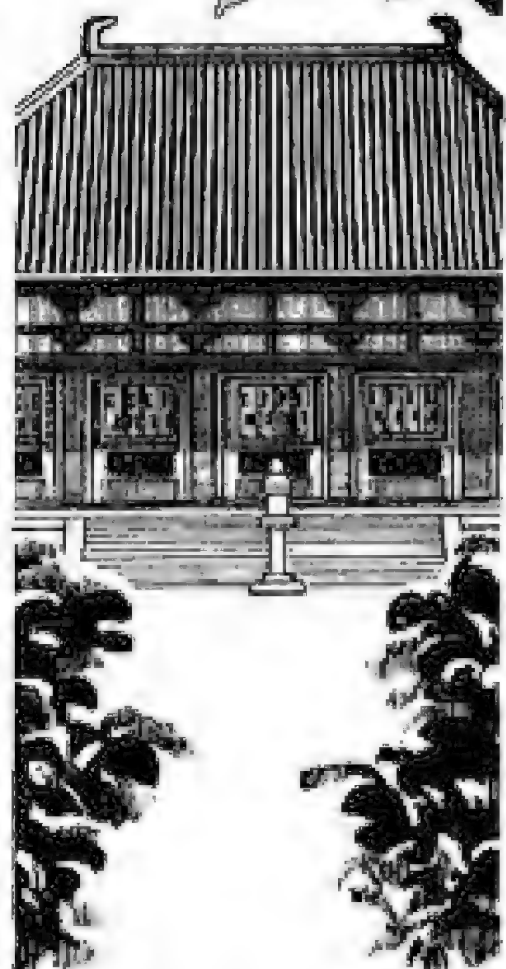
IN THE NAME  
OF THE LORD  
BUDDHA, YOU  
WILL BE  
JUDGED  
FAIRLY!

...BUT  
ONLY ONE  
OF YOUR  
WORKS WILL  
BE CHOSEN.

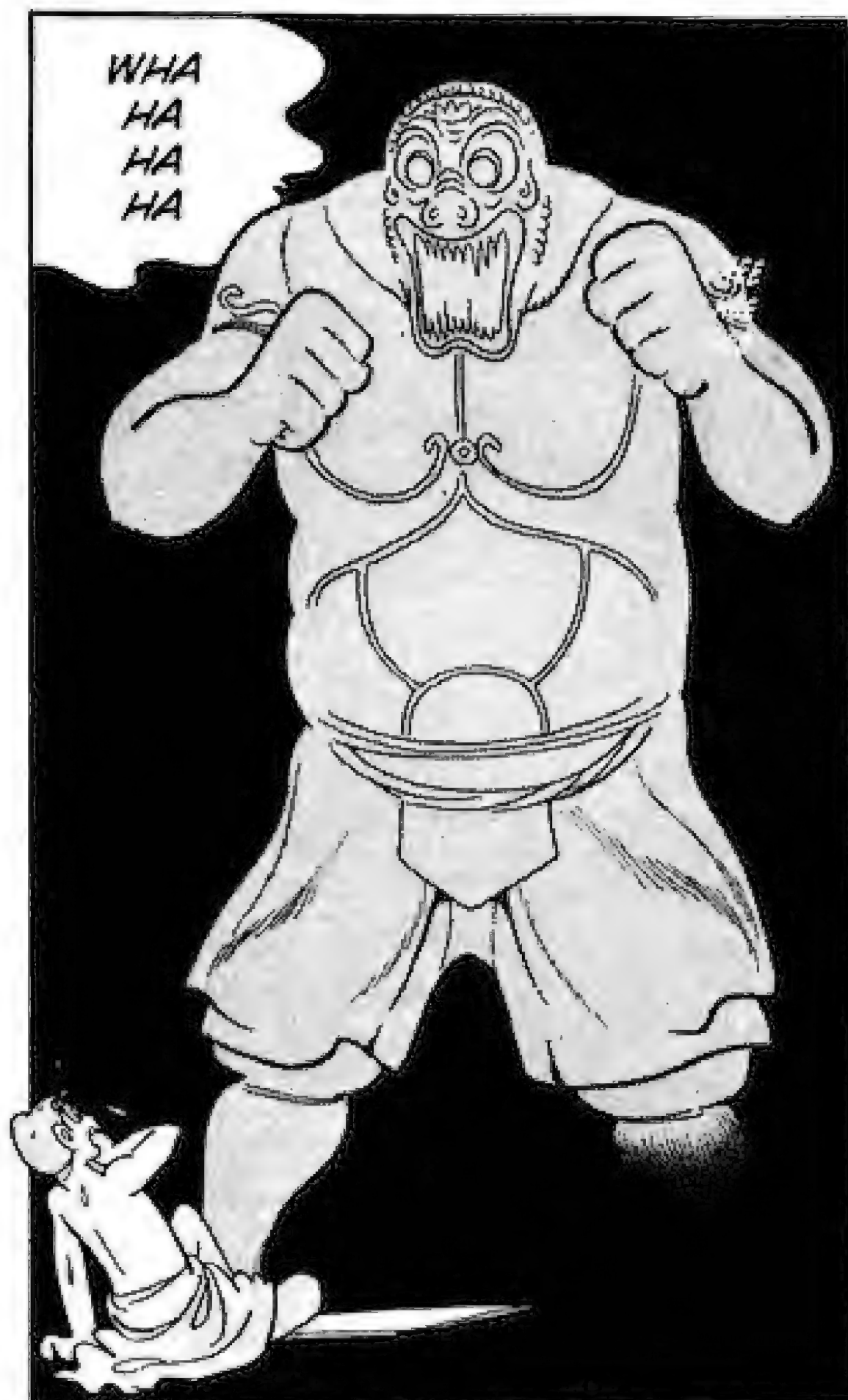
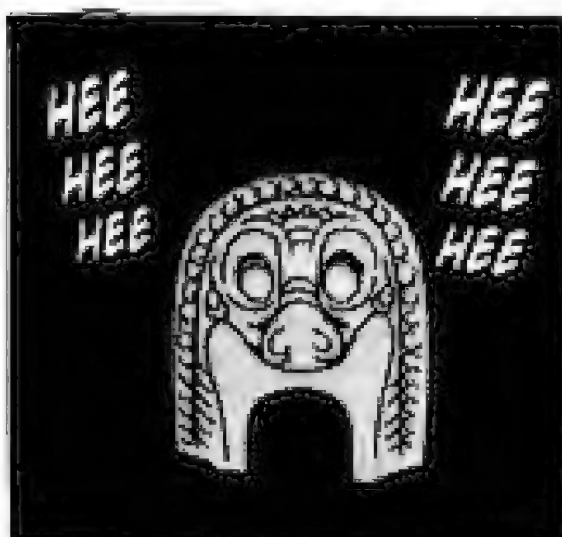




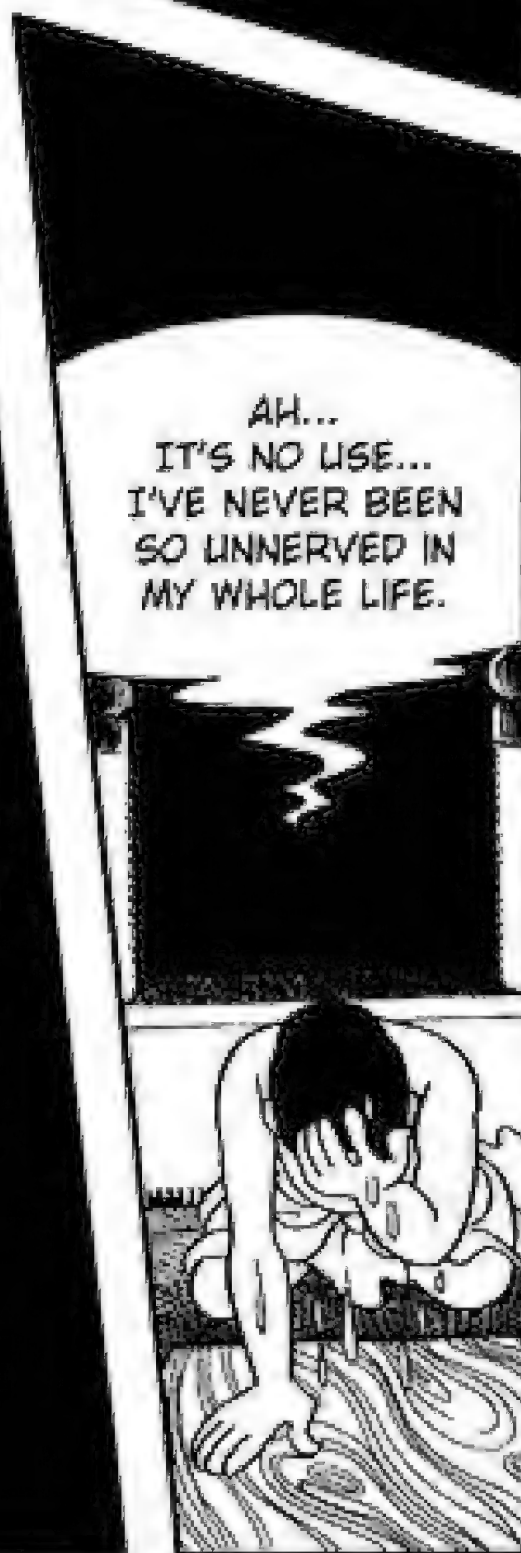




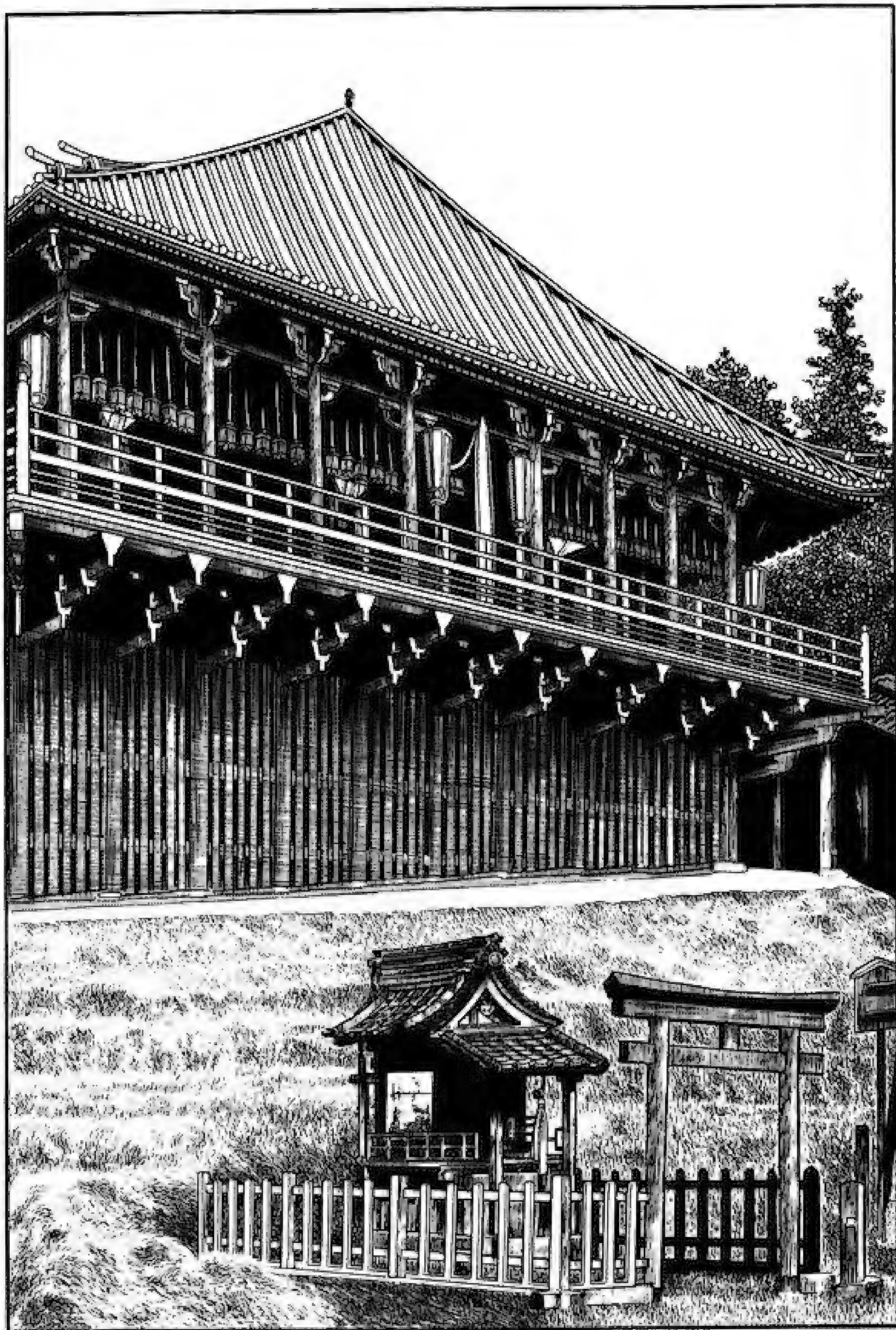




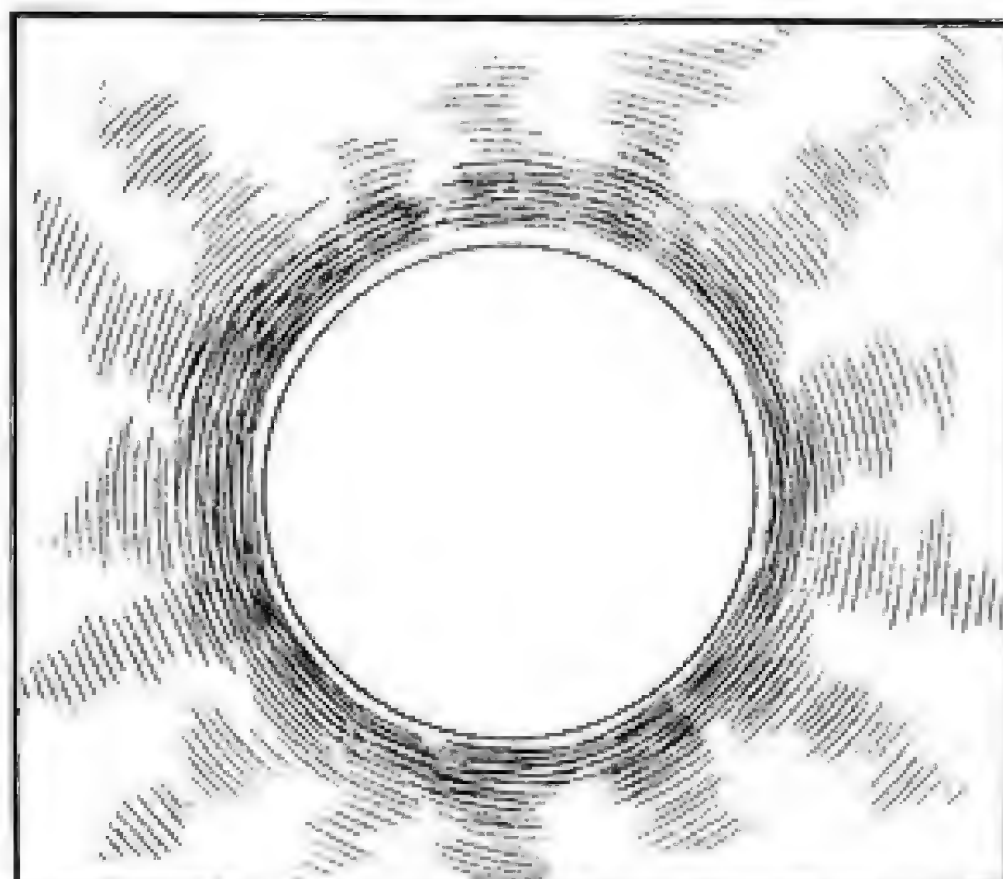
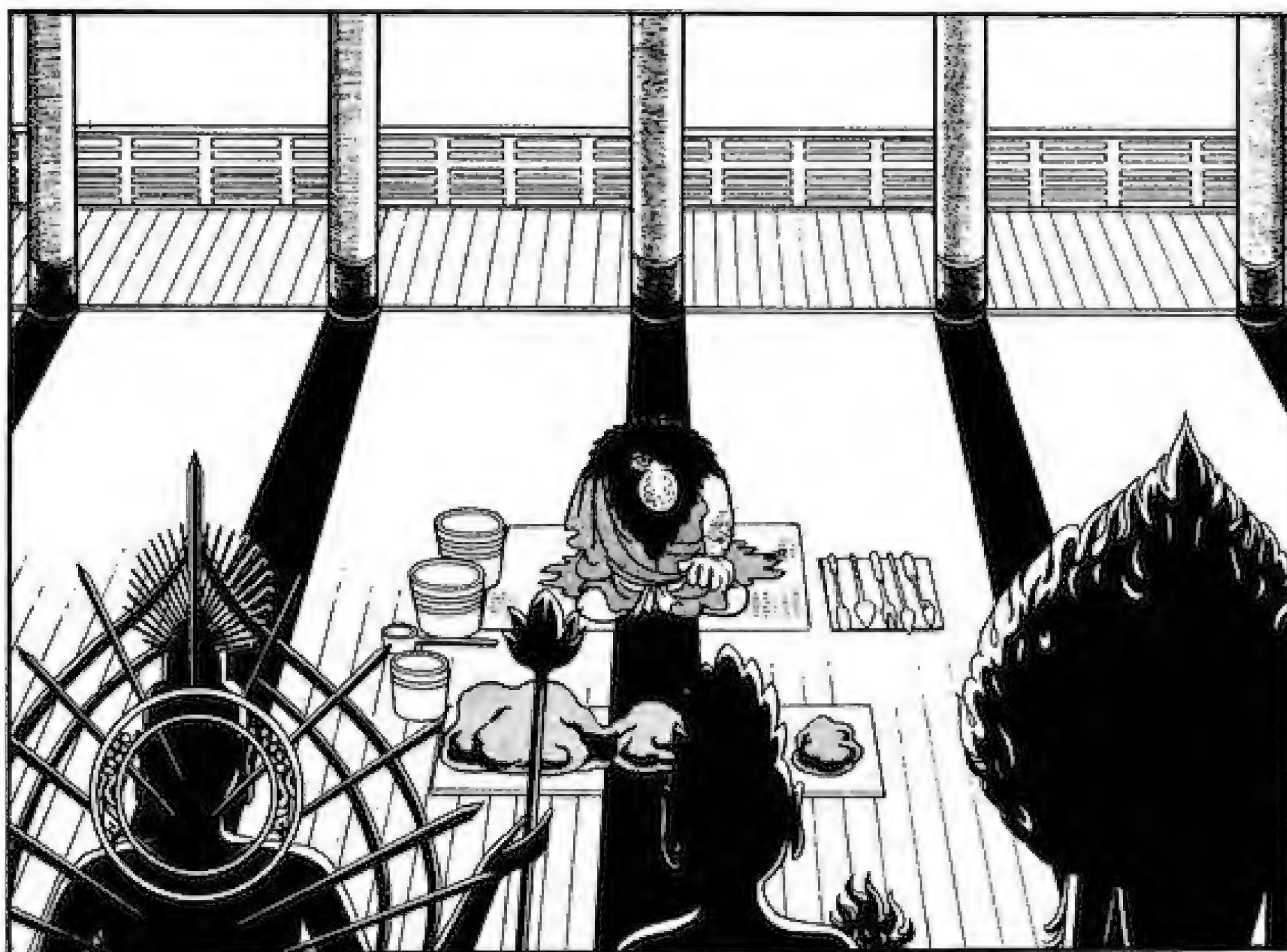




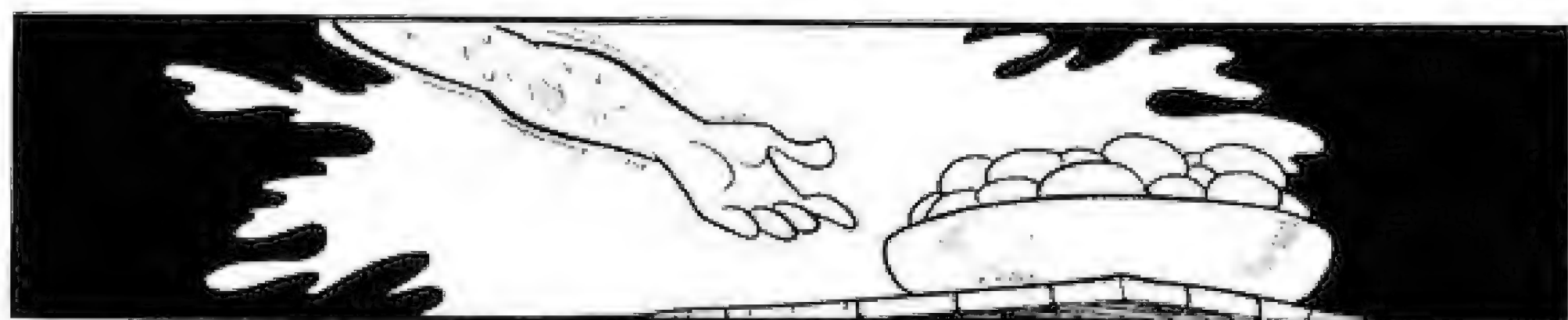




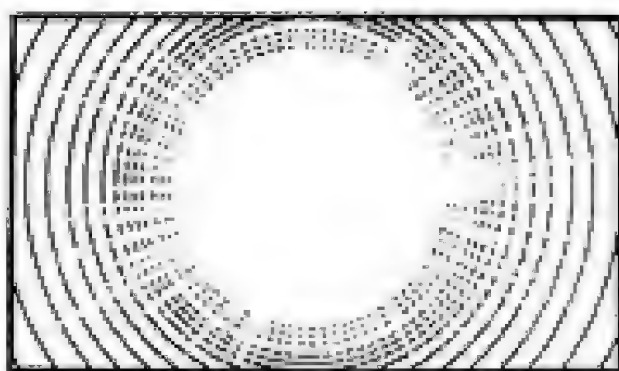




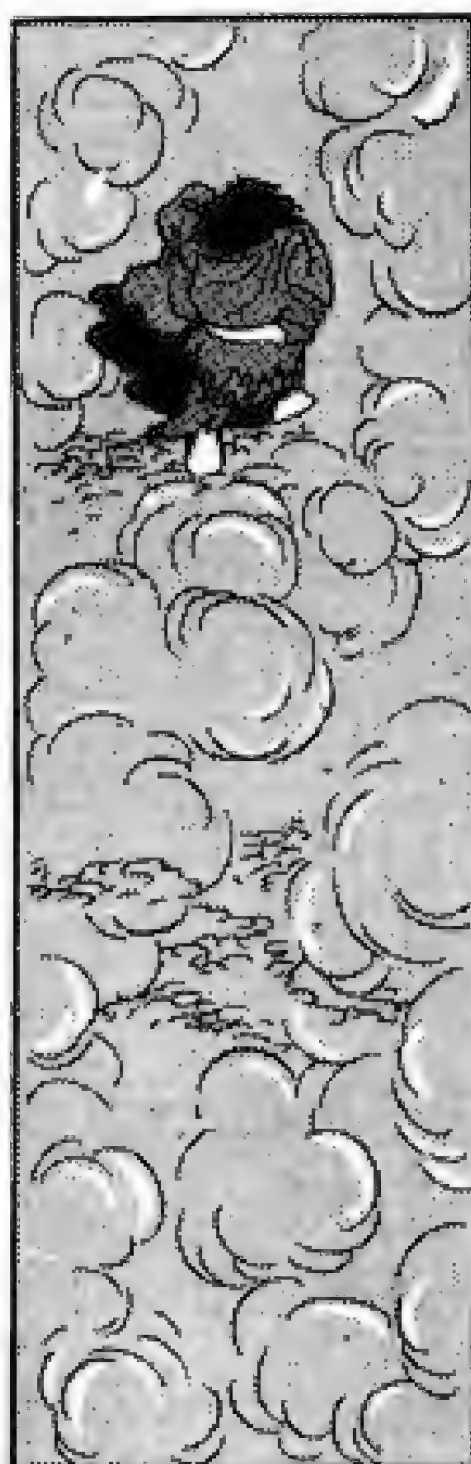
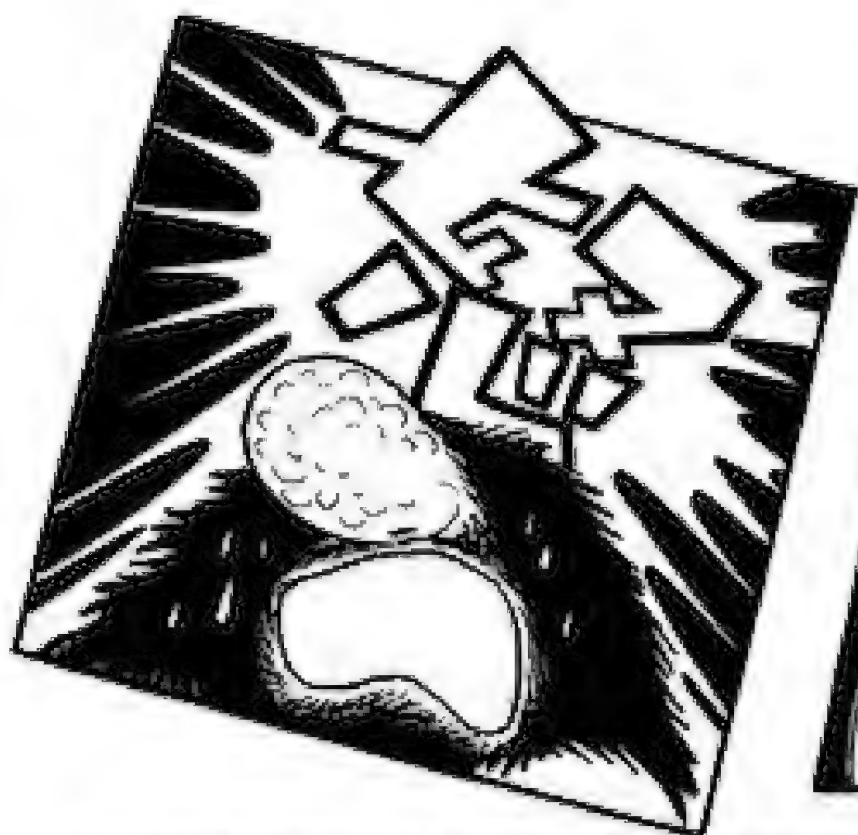


















HOW LONG  
IS ALL THIS  
SUFFERING  
AND ANGER  
GOING TO  
CONTINUE?



ETERNALLY.  
AND  
YOU,  
GAO  
ARE TO  
BEAR  
THAT  
BURDEN  
FOREVER.

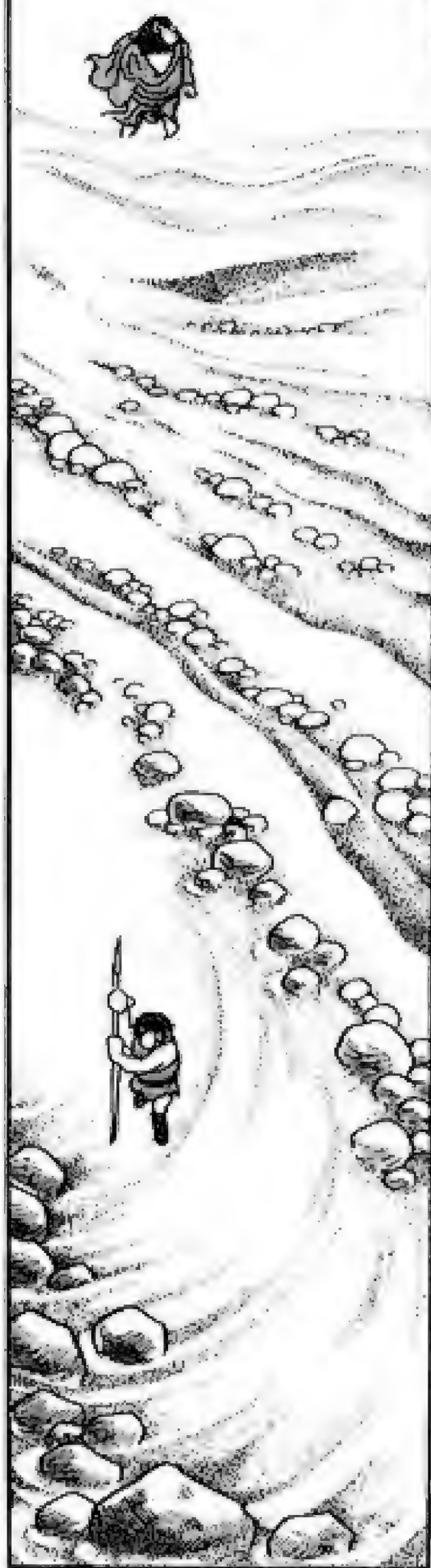
WAIT!  
THIS IS A  
DIFFERENT  
PLACE...  
WHERE  
AM I  
NOW?

YOU ARE NOW  
ON AN ALIEN  
PLANET IN A  
SOLAR SYSTEM  
LIGHT YEARS  
FROM EARTH.  
THE MAN YOU  
SEE WANDERING  
IS YOUR  
DESCENDANT...  
OR RATHER...  
HE MIGHT  
ACTUALLY  
BE YOU.





LOOK UPON  
HIM, GAO...  
HE IS A  
DESCENDANT  
OF YOURS  
THOUSANDS  
OF GENERATIONS  
REMOVED CALLED  
SARVTA... AND HE  
IS DOOMED TO  
SUFFER ETERNALLY  
ON A DISTANT  
PLANET.



THIS...  
THIS IS  
INCREDIBLE  
...

...CAN THAT  
REALLY BE MY  
DESCENDANT?



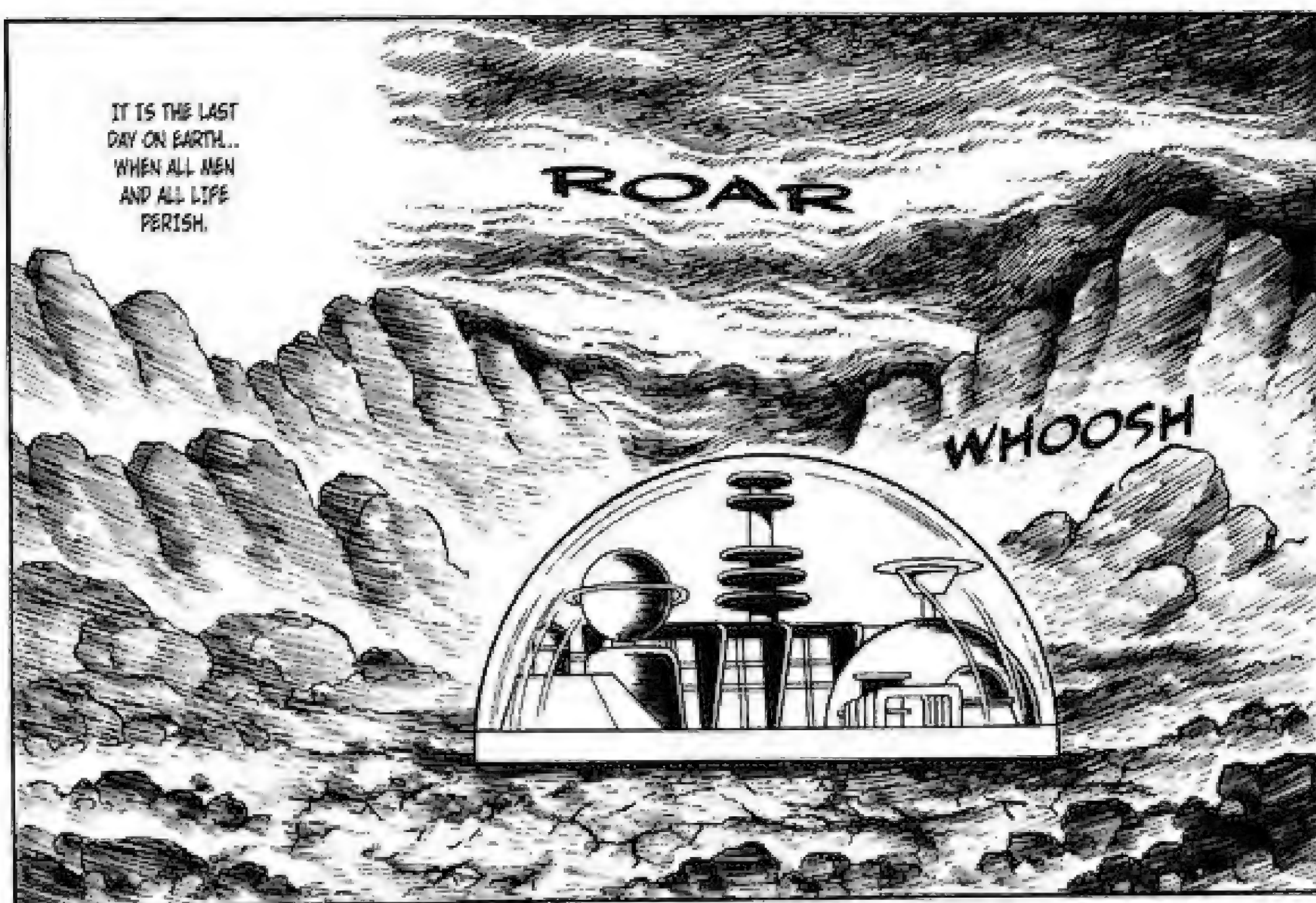
HMM. COME TO  
THINK OF IT HIS  
NOSE DOES LOOK  
LIKE MINE...

LET ME NOW  
SHOW YOU A  
DESCENDANT  
CURSED WITH  
EVEN WORSE  
SUFFERING,  
GAO.





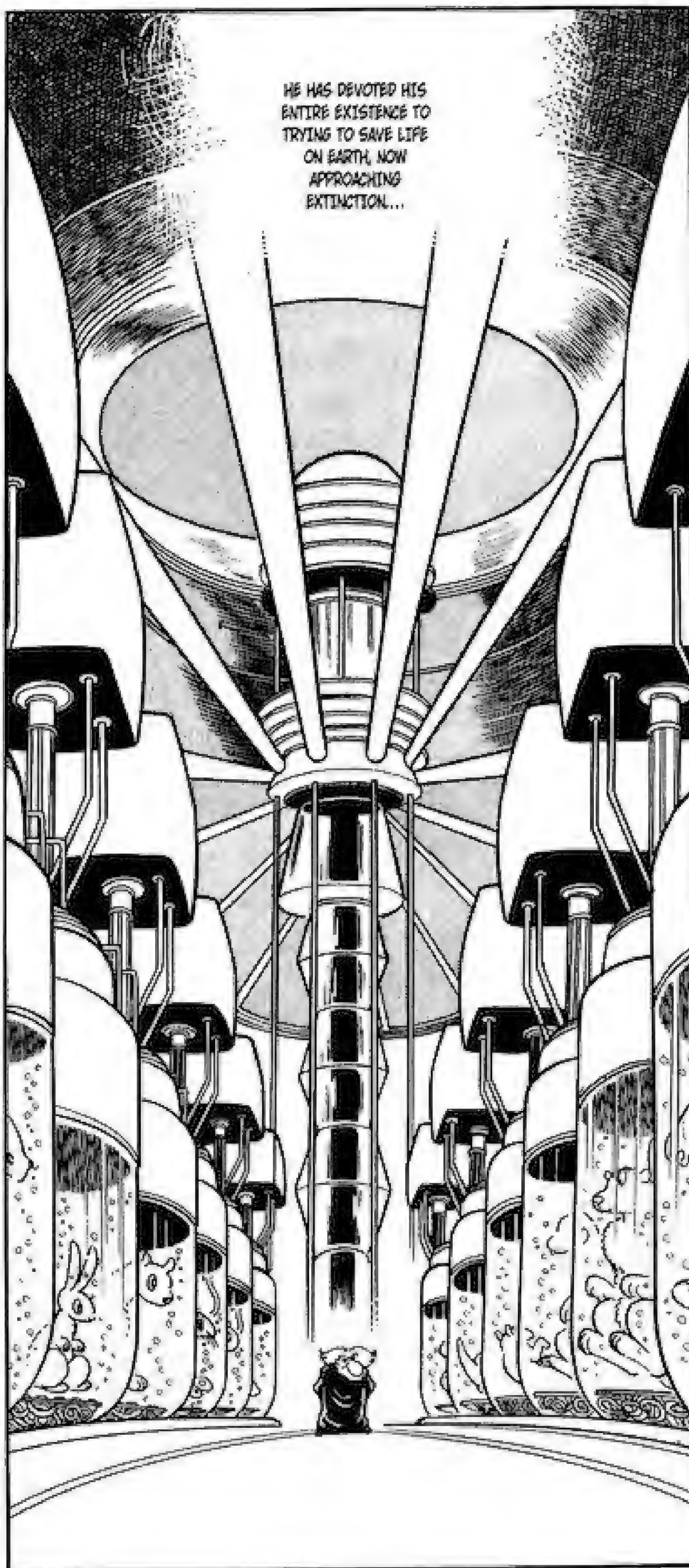
IT IS THE LAST  
DAY ON EARTH...  
WHEN ALL MEN  
AND ALL LIFE  
PERISH.



...BUT FOR  
ONE MAN IT IS  
UNBEARABLE  
FOR A SPECIAL  
REASON...  
BEHOLD!







HE HAS DEVOTED HIS  
ENTIRE EXISTENCE TO  
TRYING TO SAVE LIFE  
ON EARTH, NOW  
APPROACHING  
EXTINCTION...



...  
IN  
VAIN  
....

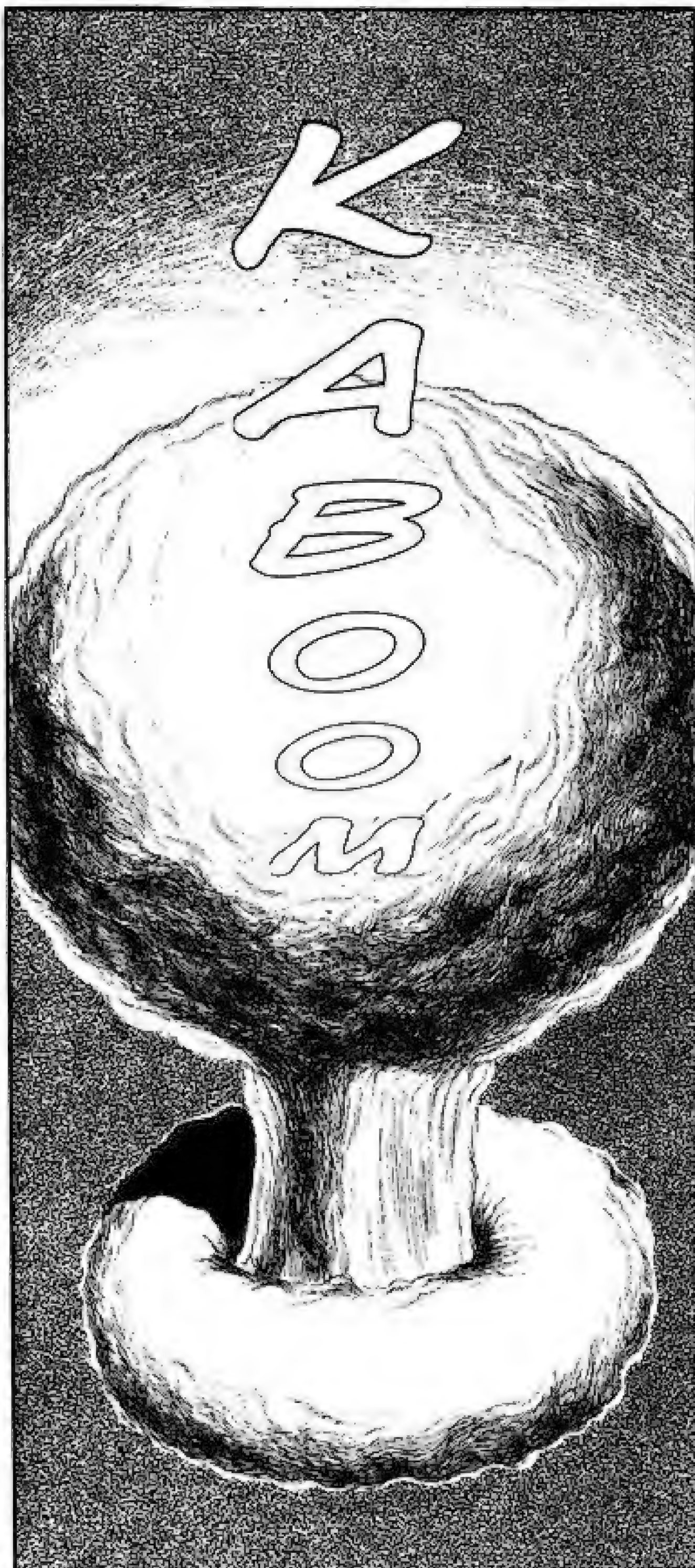


...  
IT IS  
THE END  
OF THE  
WORLD  
...



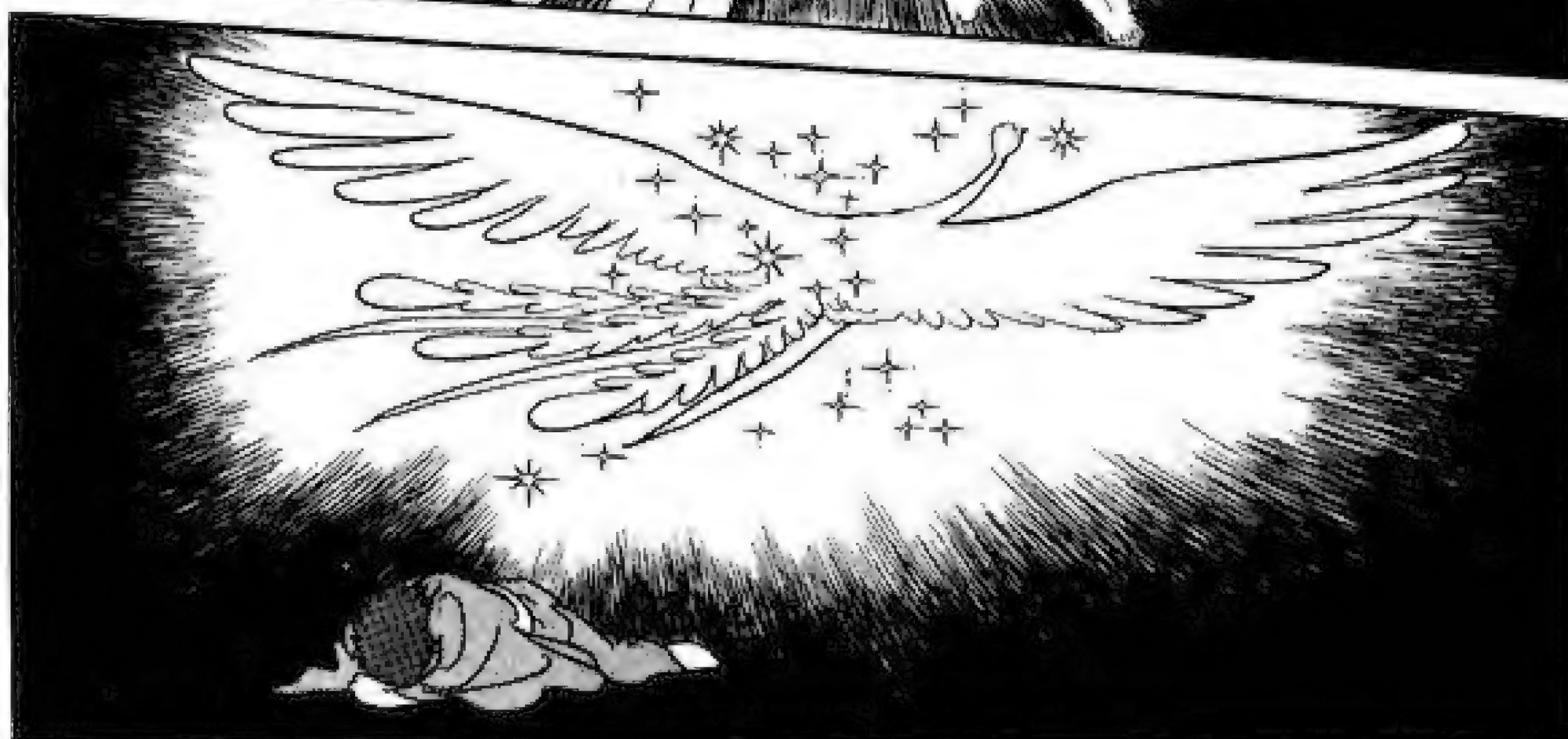
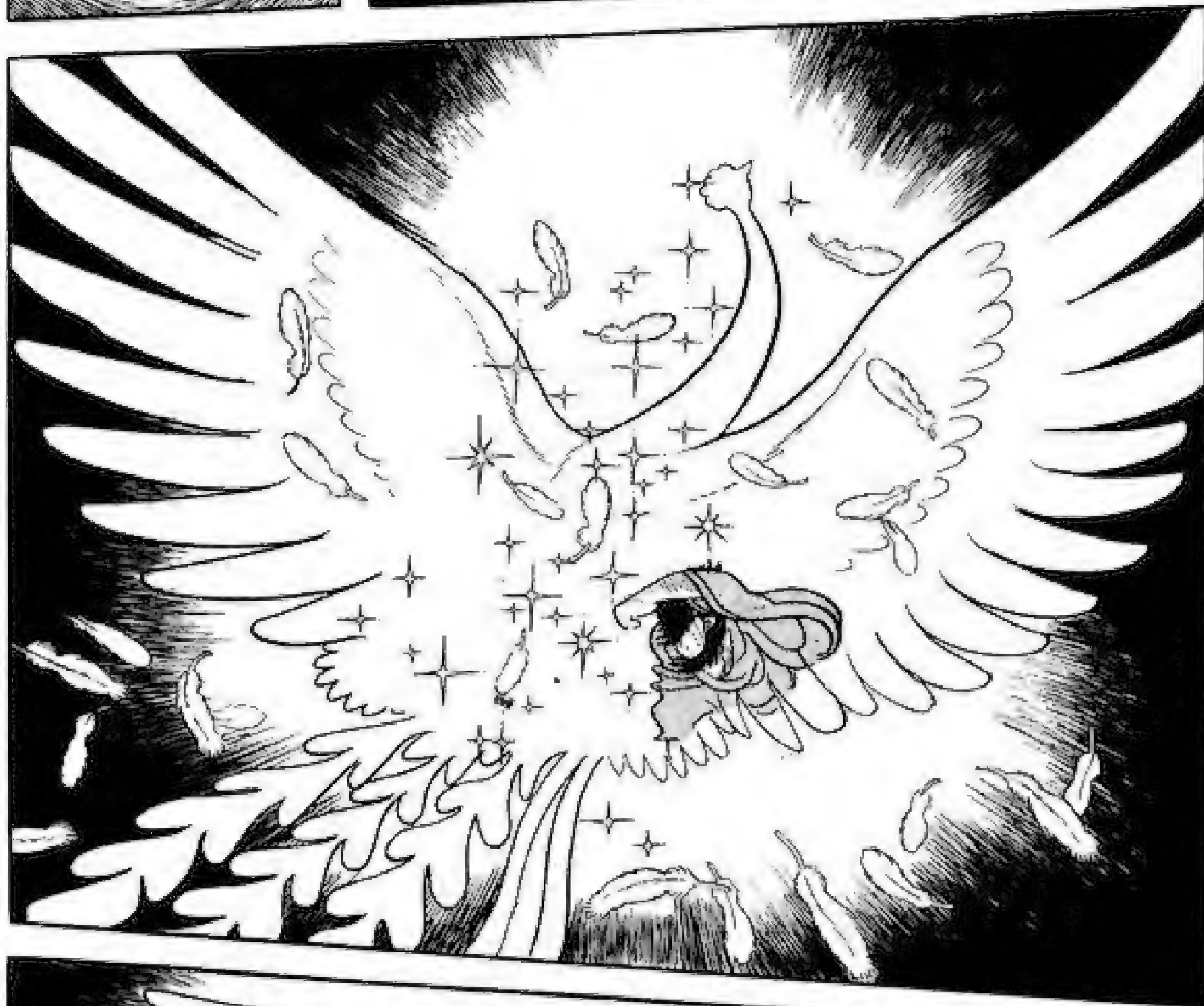
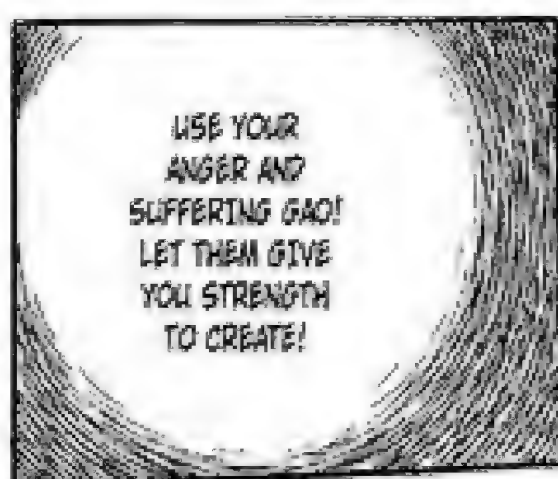
...  
AND OF  
HIM  
....



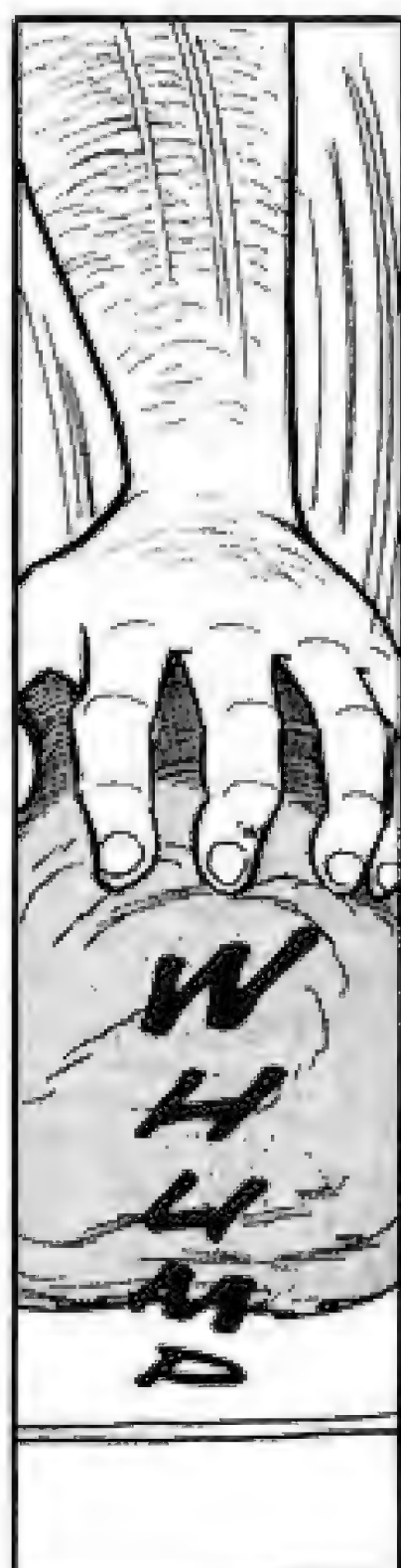


ENOUGH!  
I'VE SEEN  
ENOUGH!  
WHY DO YOU  
SHOW ME  
THESE  
SCENES?!

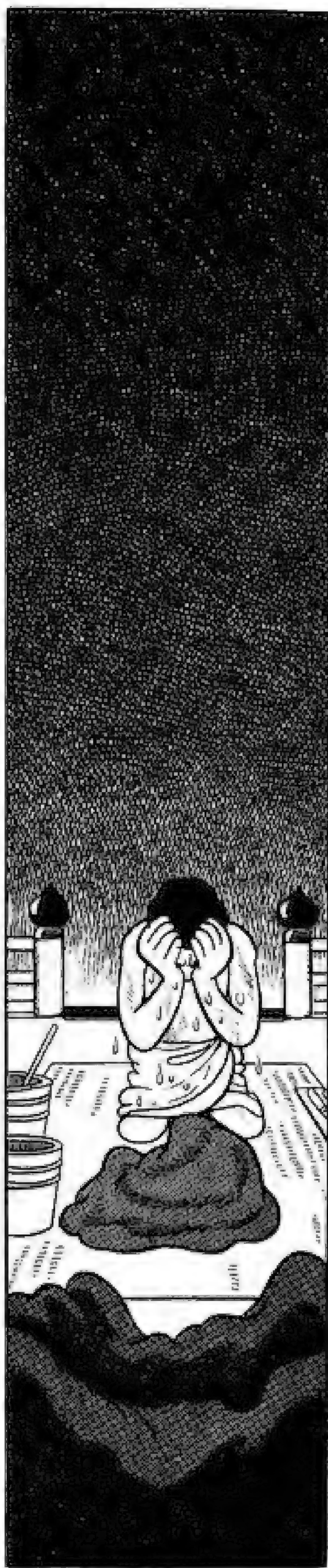
















CEASE  
YOUR  
STUPID  
GOSSIP!

I CAN'T  
CONCENTRATE  
BECAUSE OF  
YOU DOLTS!



AAAH  
....

AH, MANJUSHRI,  
BODHISATTVA OF  
WISDOM, GIVE  
ME STRENGTH  
TO CREATE!



CURSE  
MY  
LUCK  
!

AM I NOT  
THE BEST  
SCULPTOR  
IN THE  
LAND?

WHAT'S  
HAPPENED  
TO ME  
?!



AAH...  
I WAS  
SO CREATIVE  
WHEN I WAS  
YOUNGER!

IT'S  
TRUE THAT I  
NEARLY GAVE  
UP WHEN GAO  
SLASHED MY  
LEFT ARM  
...

AND I  
SEARCHED  
ALL OVER  
THE WEST  
FOR THE  
PHOENIX  
...

BUT  
EVEN  
THEN I  
FOUND  
THE  
DETERMINA-  
TION TO  
START  
OVER  
WITH  
MY RIGHT  
...

I PUT MY  
WHOLE BEING  
INTO CARVING  
THE GODDESS  
OF MERCY WHEN  
I USED BUCHI  
AS A MODEL  
....



THEN MY  
WORK  
WAS MY  
WHOLE  
LIFE.

WHAT'S  
HAPPENED TO  
ME NOW THAT  
I'VE REACHED  
THE PINNACLE  
OF FAME AS A  
CRAFTSMAN?



WHY  
CAN  
I NO  
LONGER  
CREATE?!



AAH...  
BODHISATTVAS  
....  
ALL POWERFUL  
BUDDHAS...  
I BEG YOU...

SHOW ME  
...  
YOUR  
WRETCHED  
SERVANT,  
WHAT TO DO  
...



WHY AM  
I MAKING  
THESE  
GARGOYLES  
?

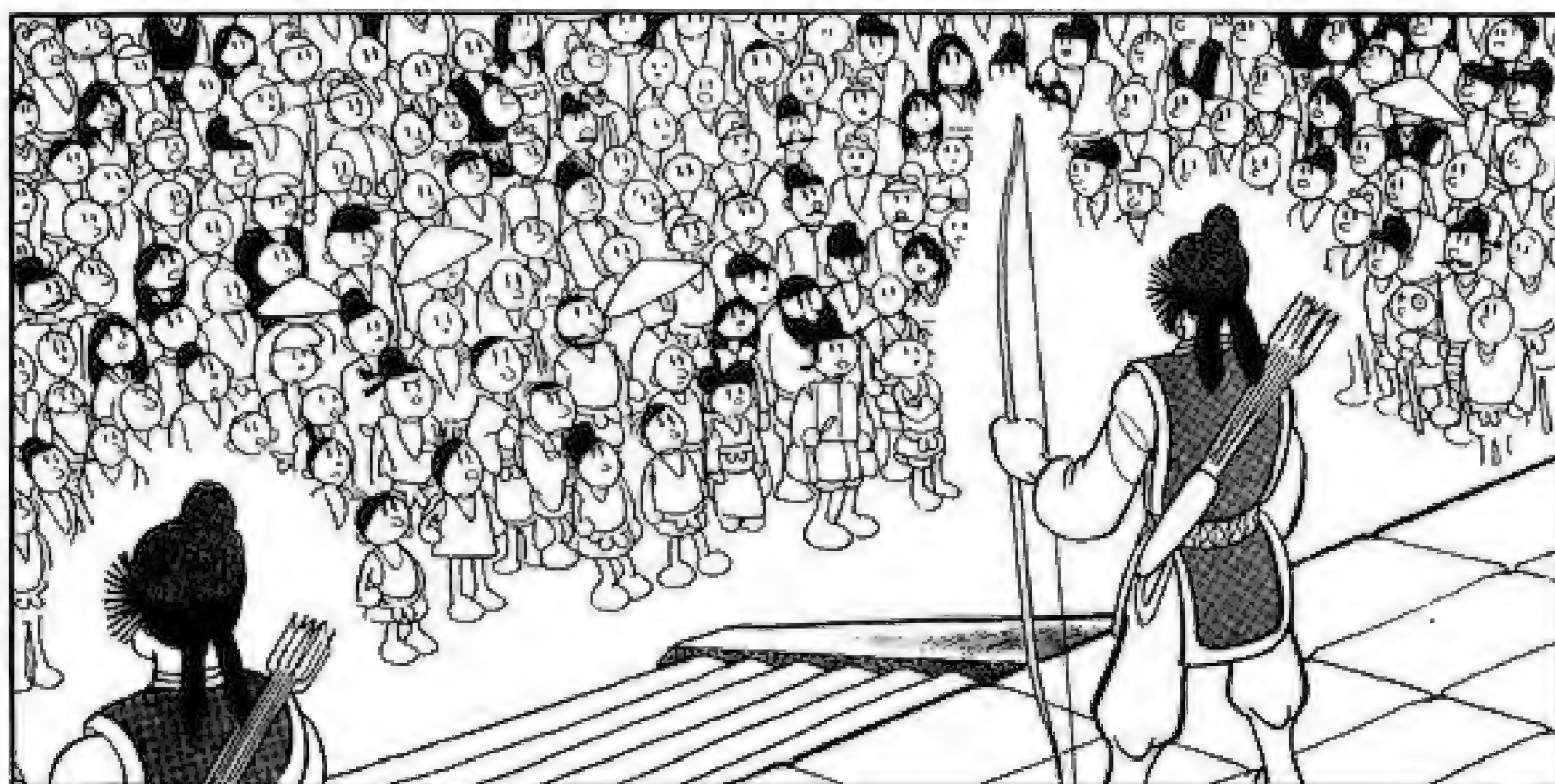
IS IT  
JUST FOR  
FAME AND  
POWER  
?



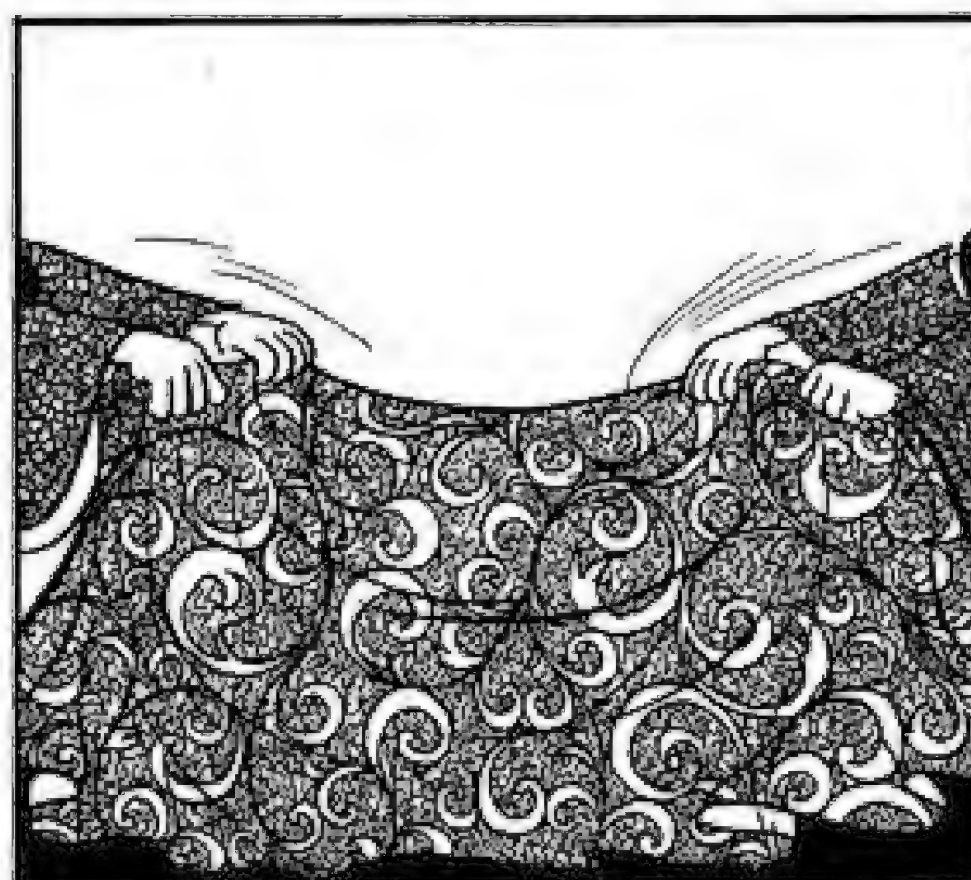
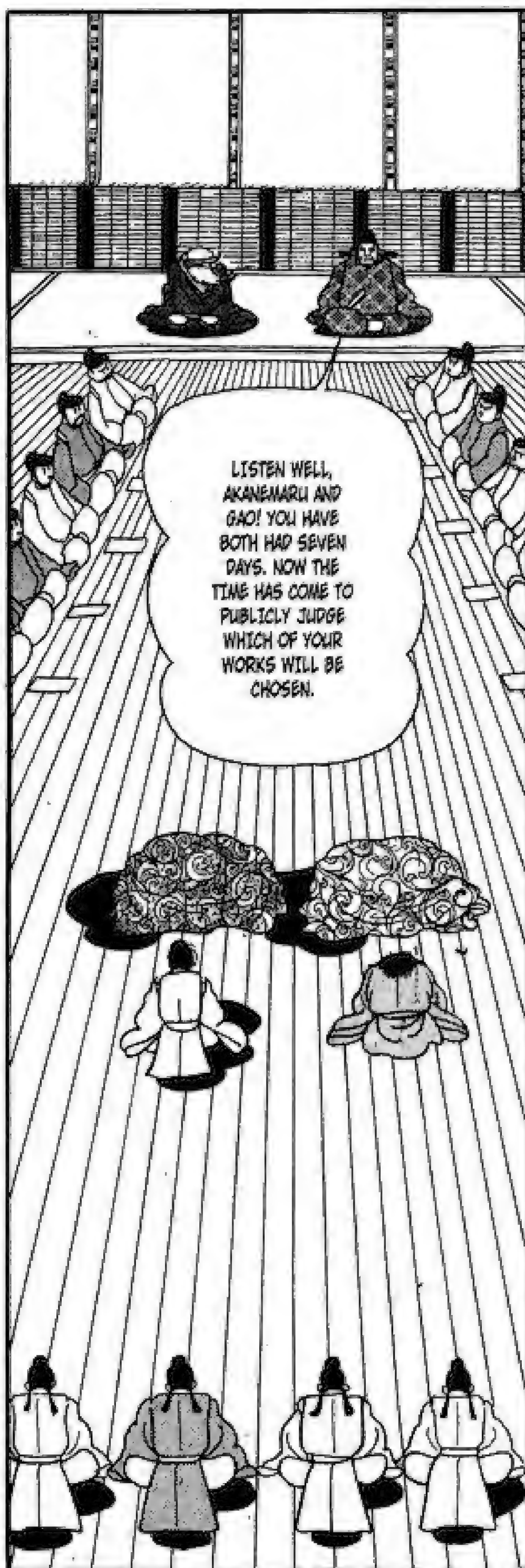
IF IT IS...  
DAMN ME  
TO  
PERDITION...  
I BEG YOU...



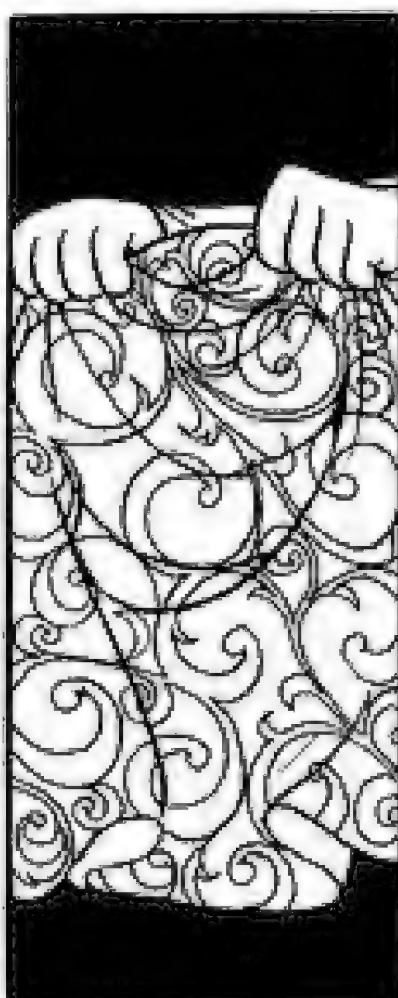
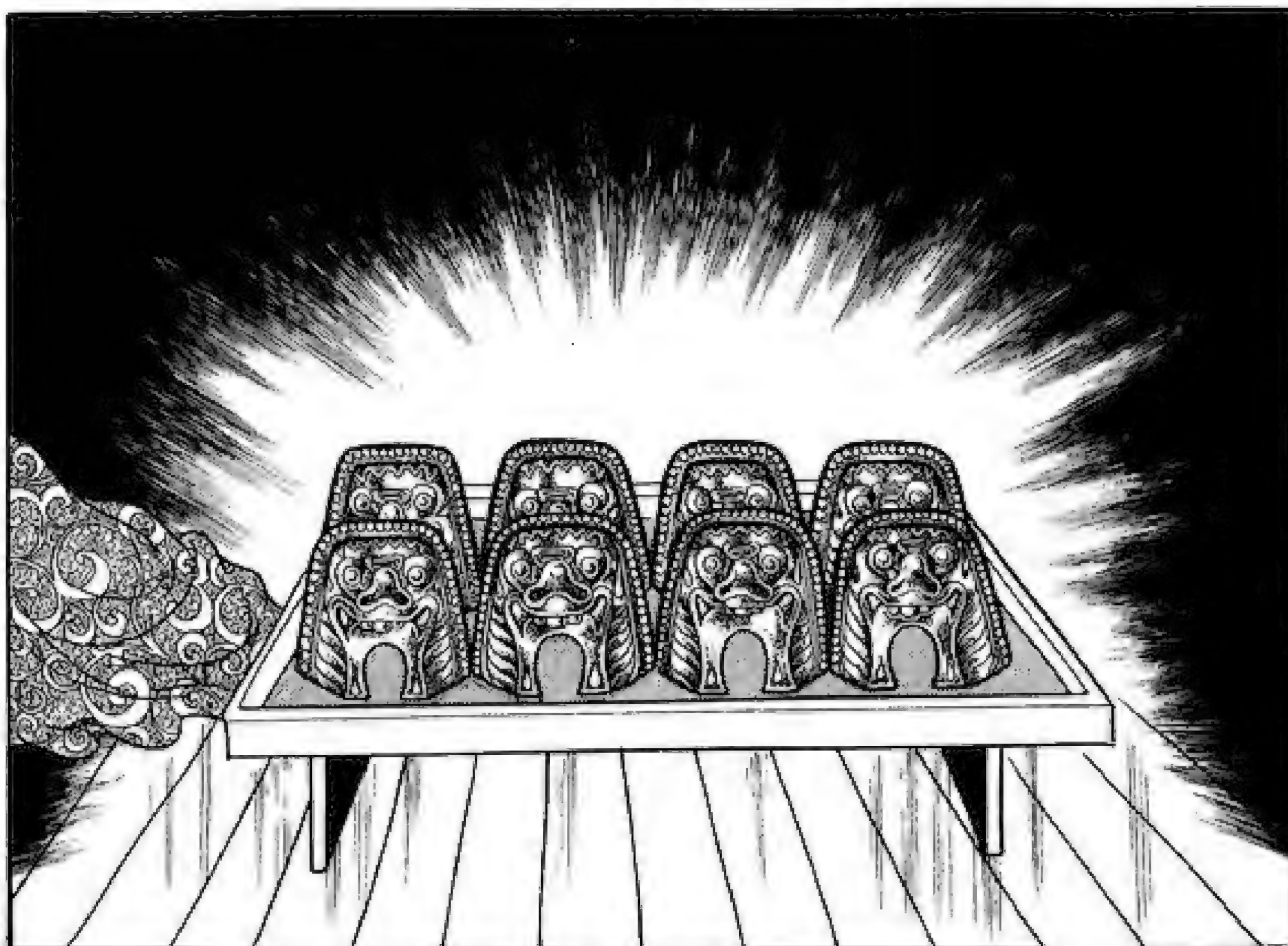




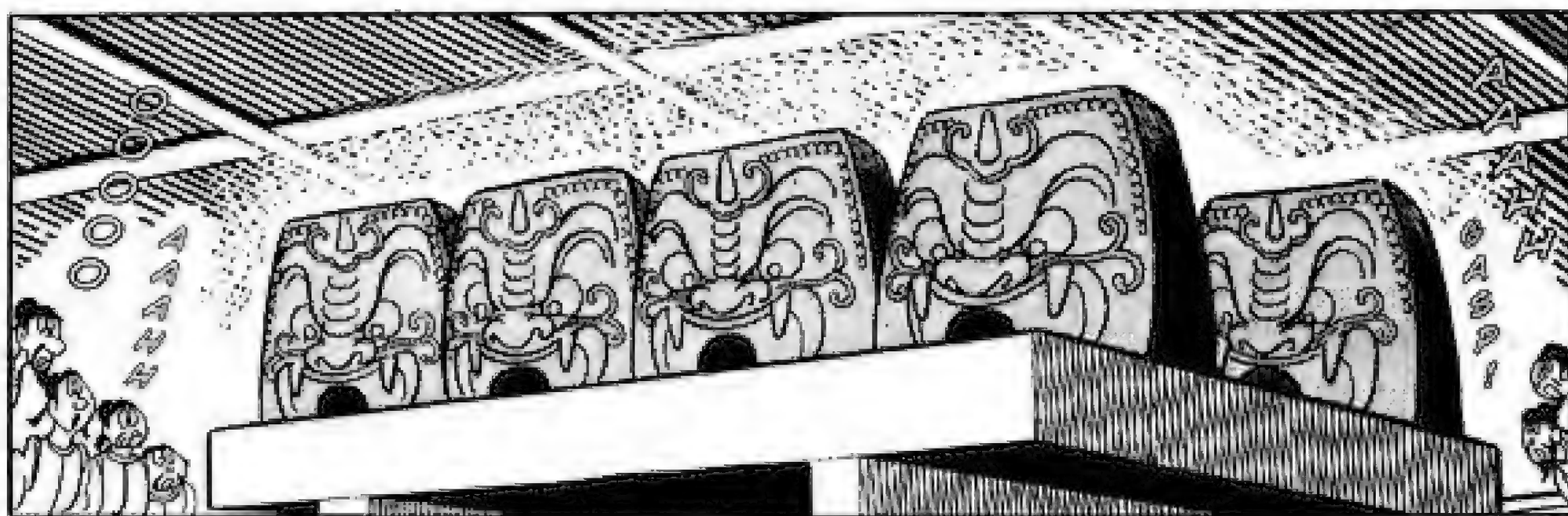




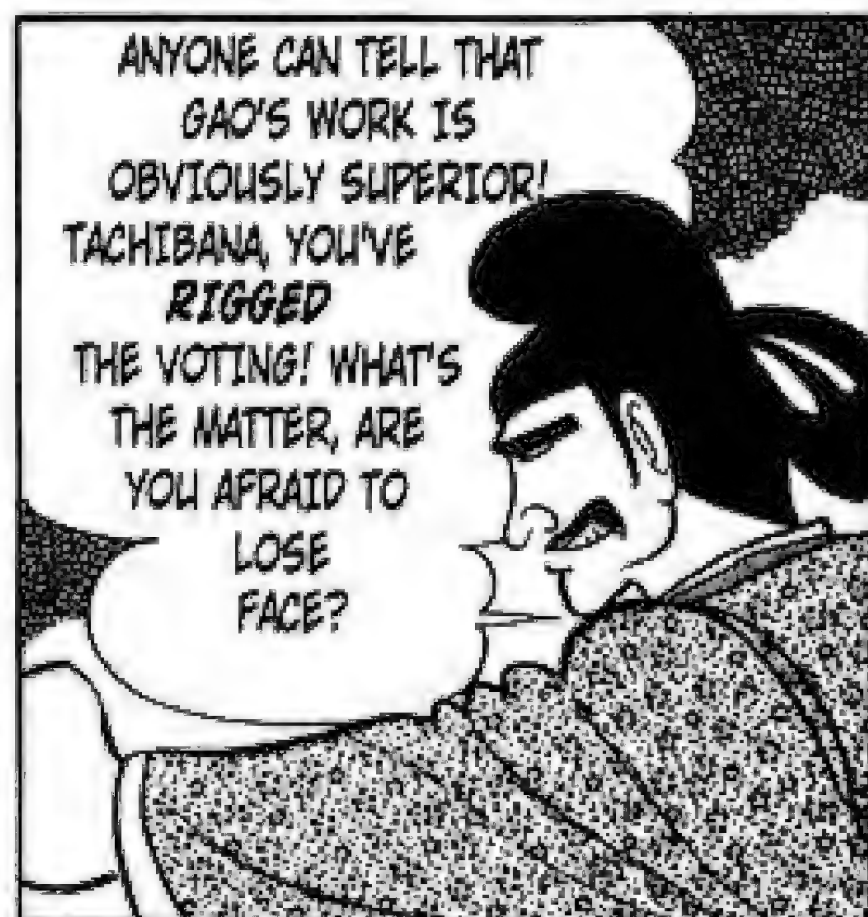
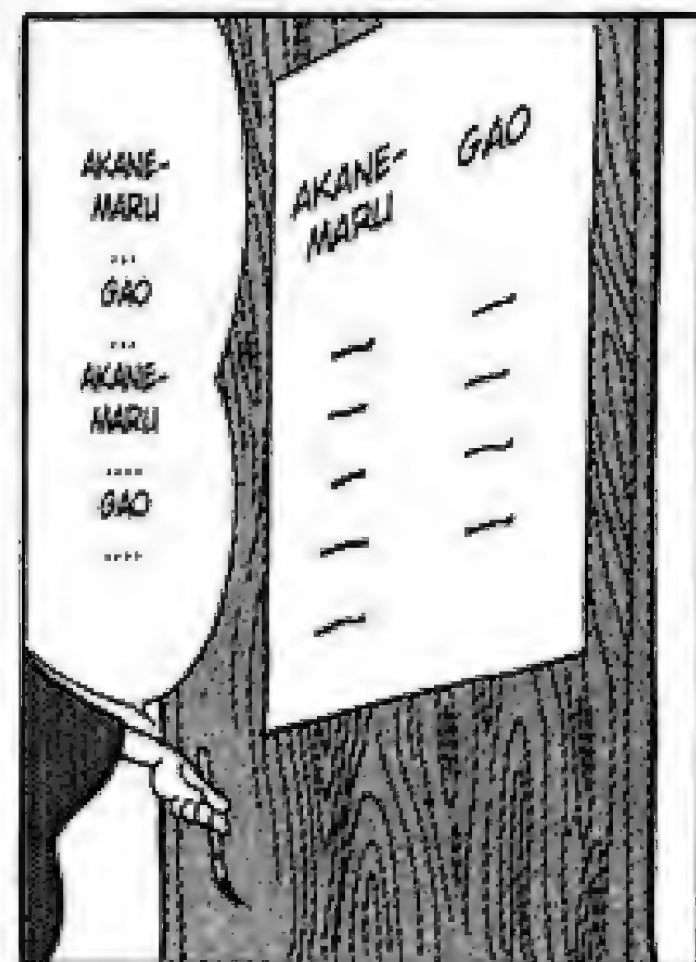
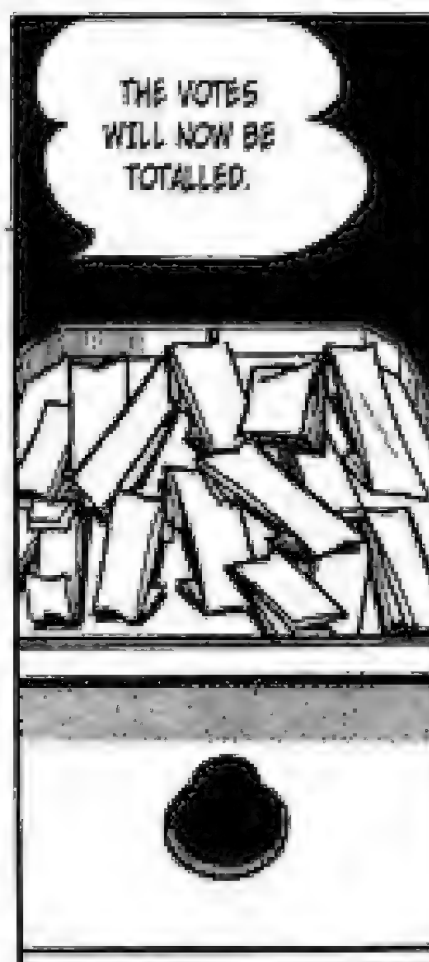








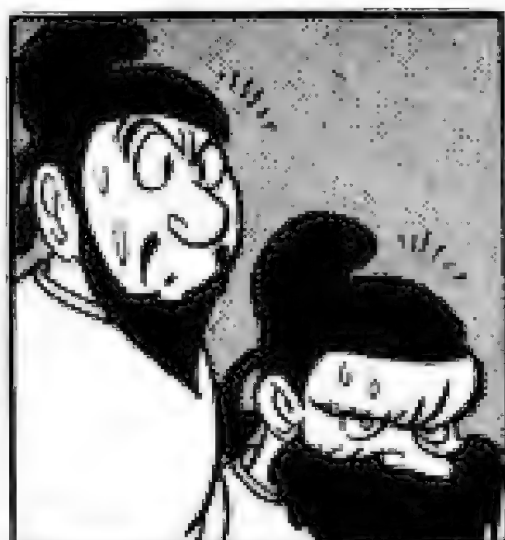
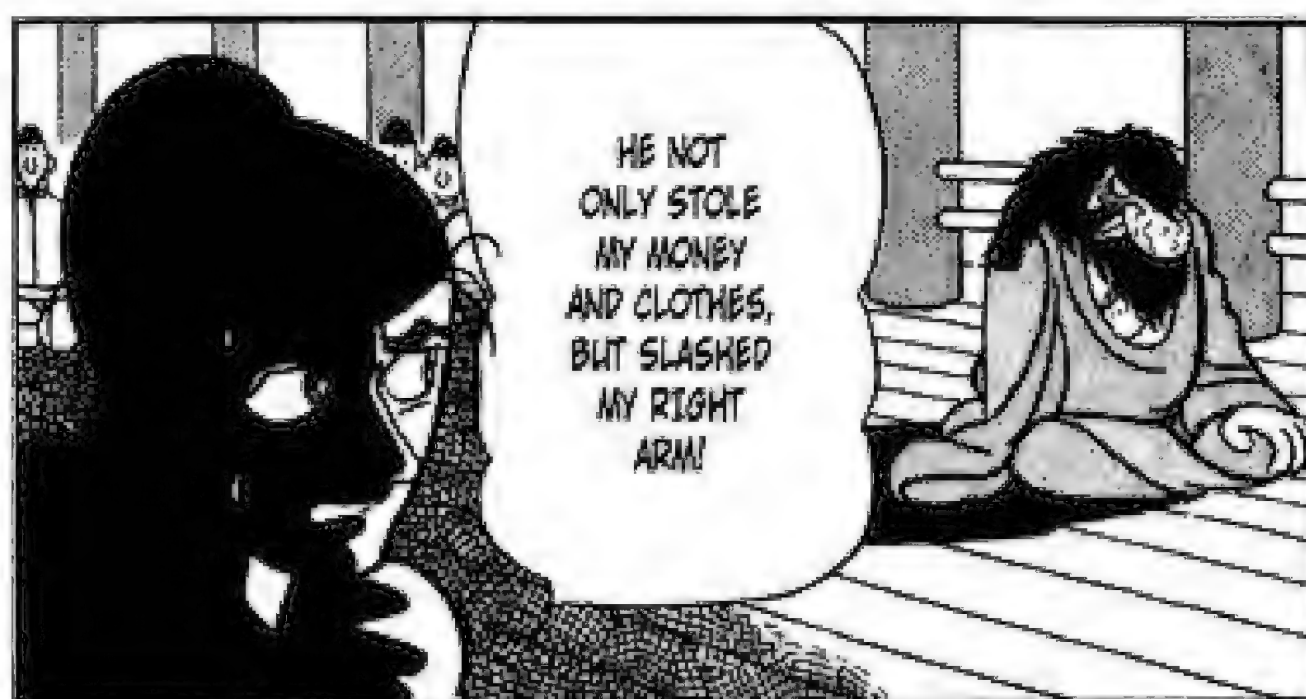
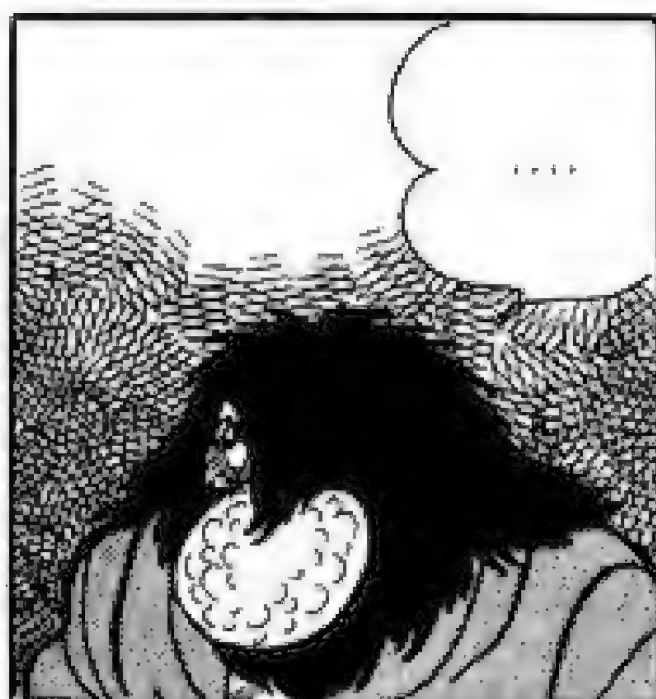








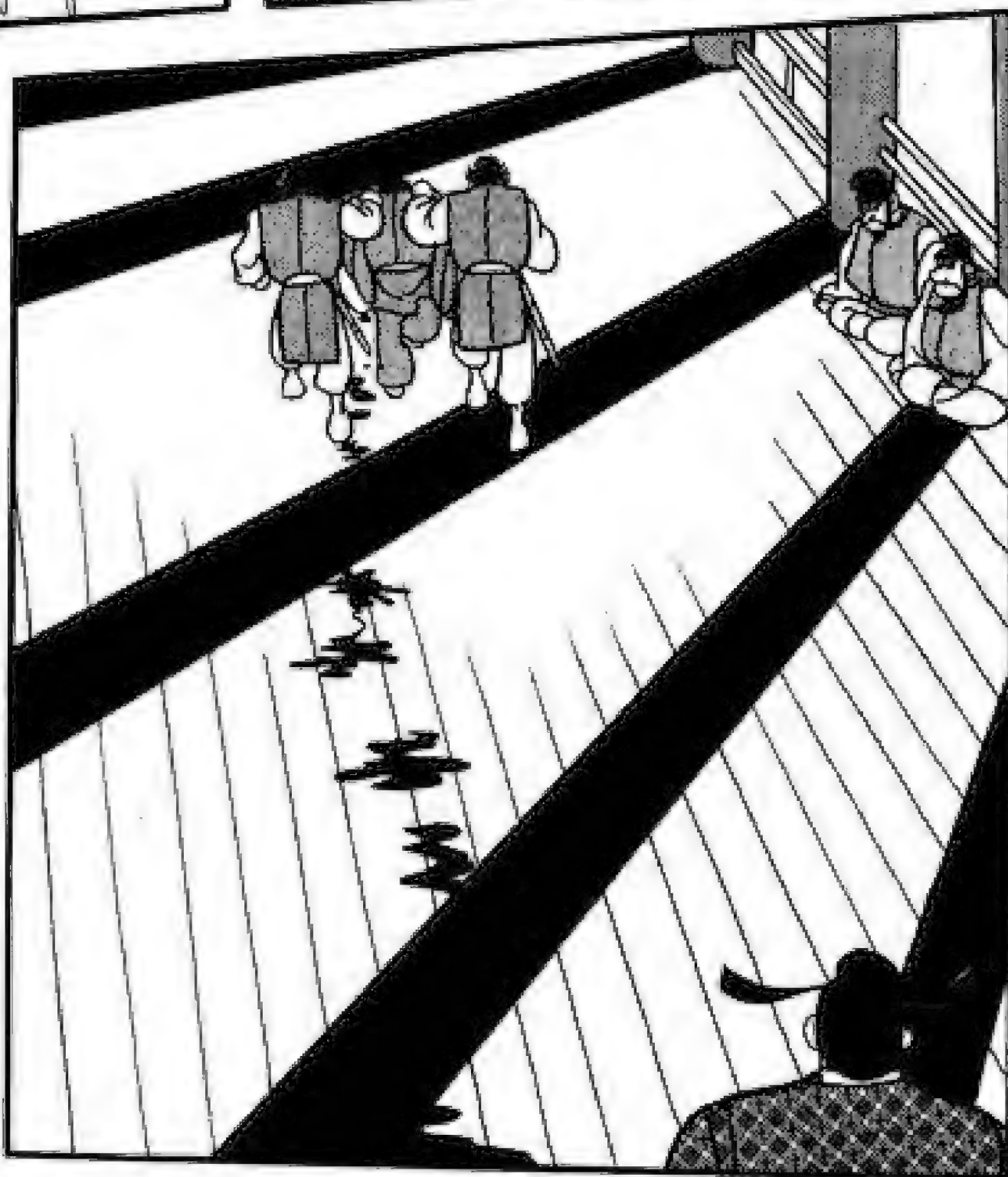
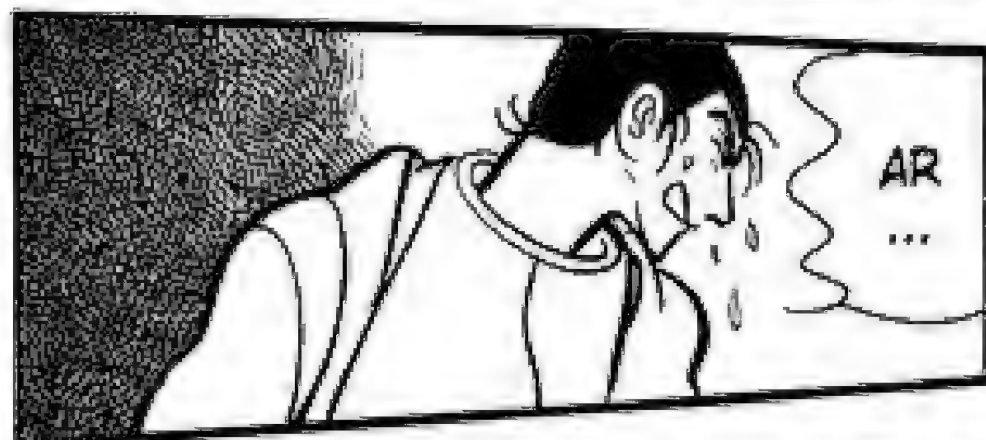
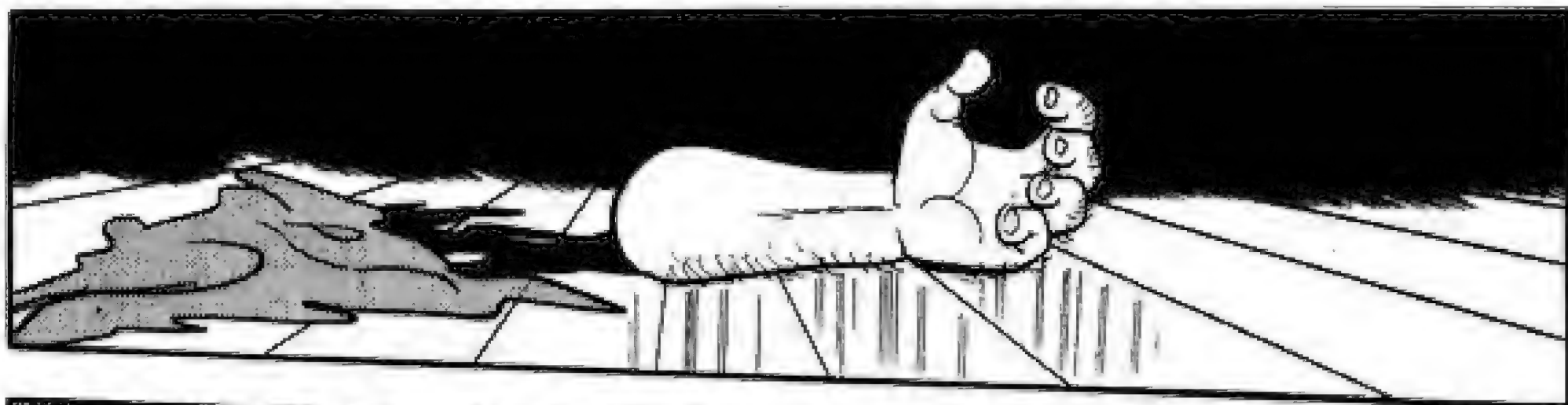




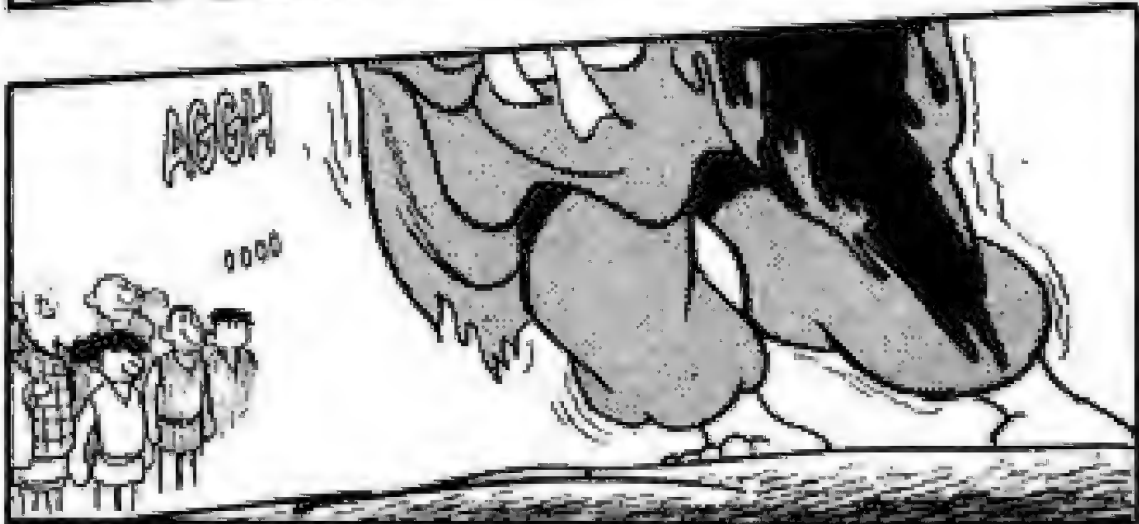














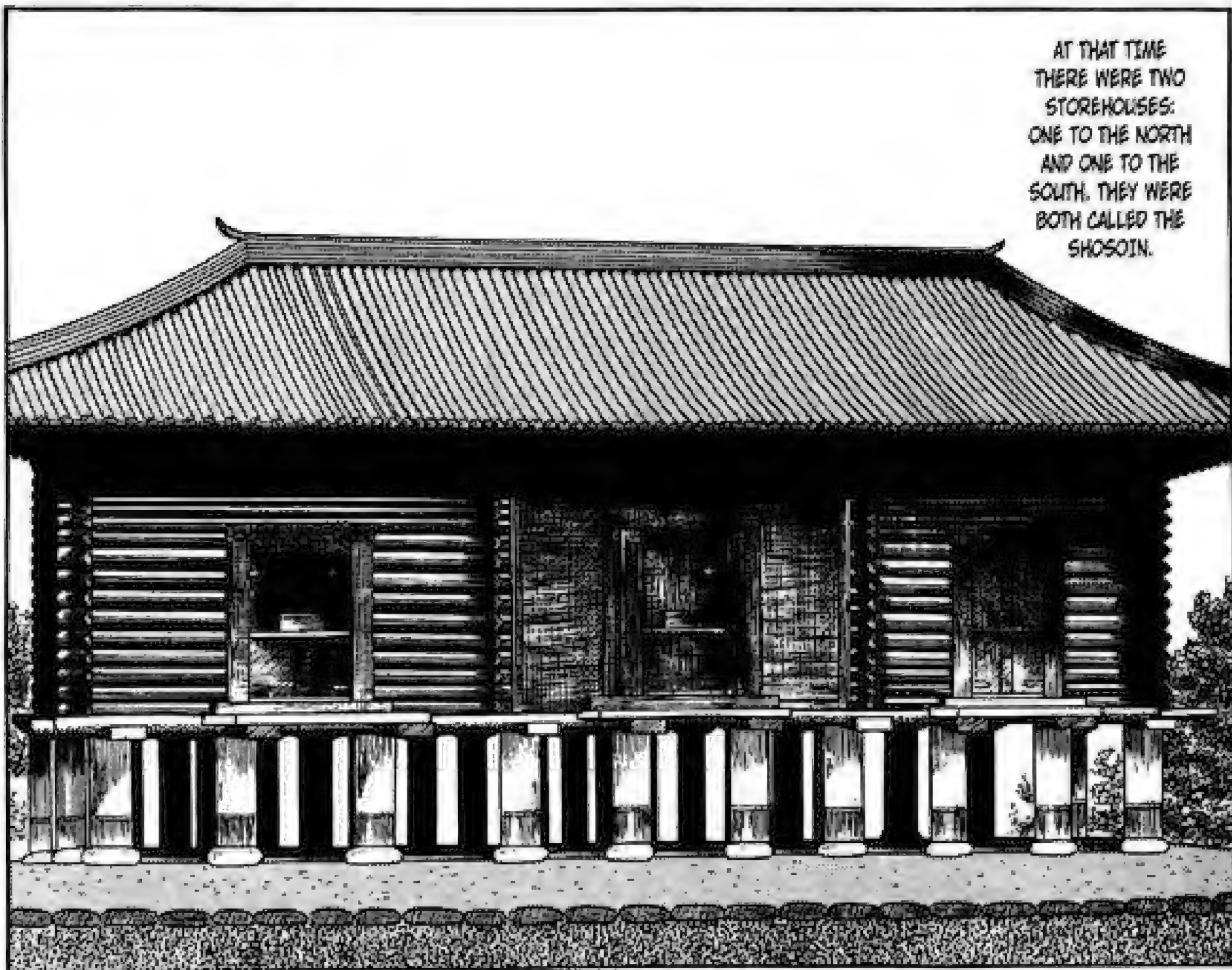
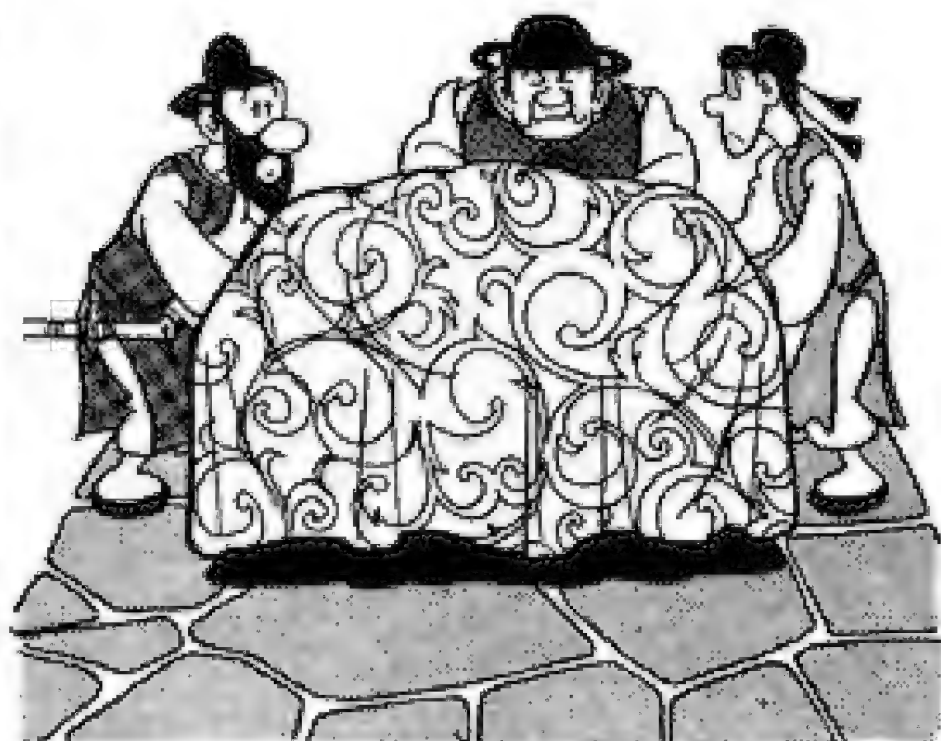






AKANEMARU'S GARGOYLES WERE IMMEDIATELY PLACED ON THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE PAVILION OF THE GREAT BUDDHA. THEY BLENDED HARMONIOUSLY WITH ITS BEAUTY, BUT THEY PASSED ALMOST UNNOTICED, DWARFED BY THE BUILDING'S ENORMITY.

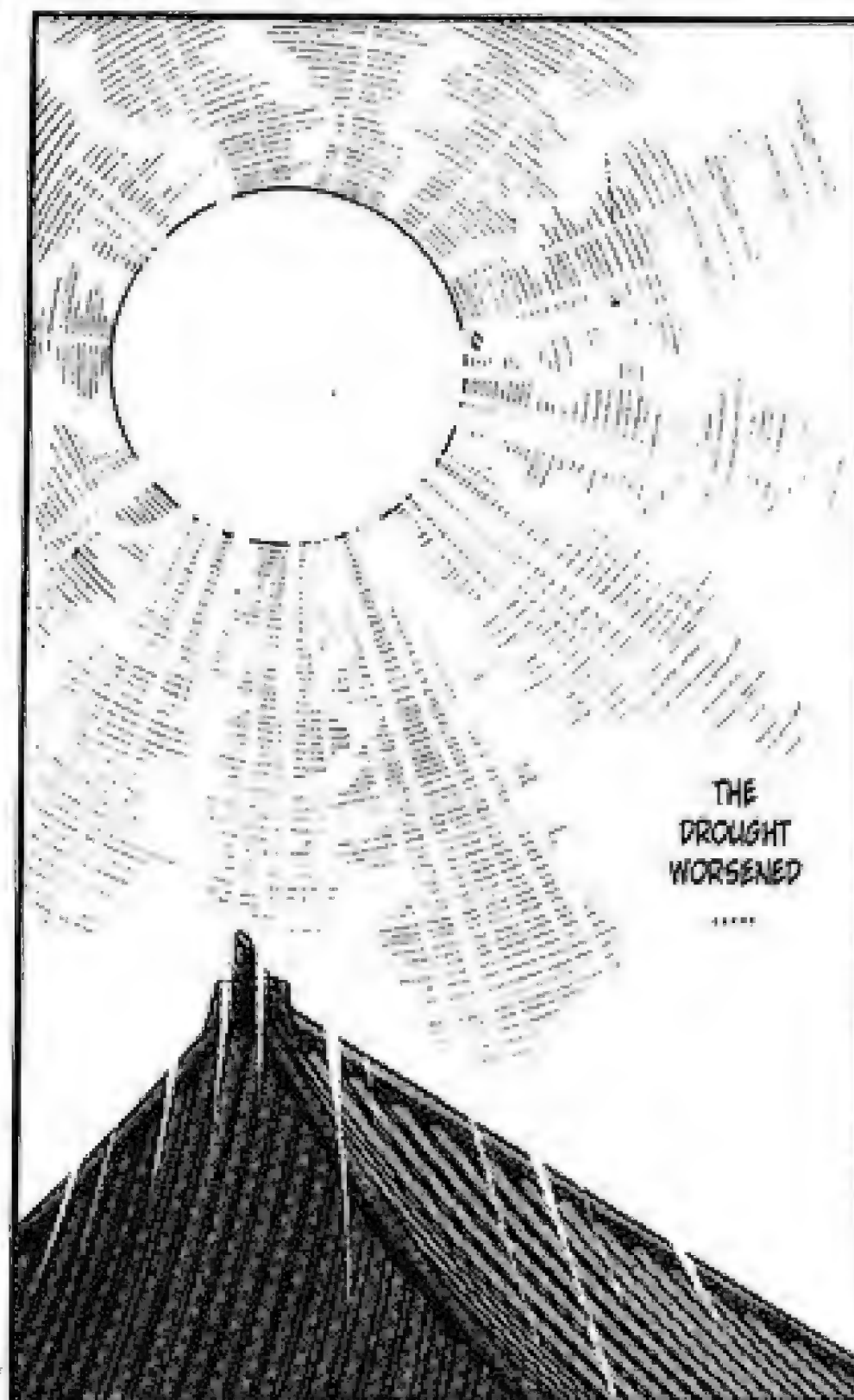
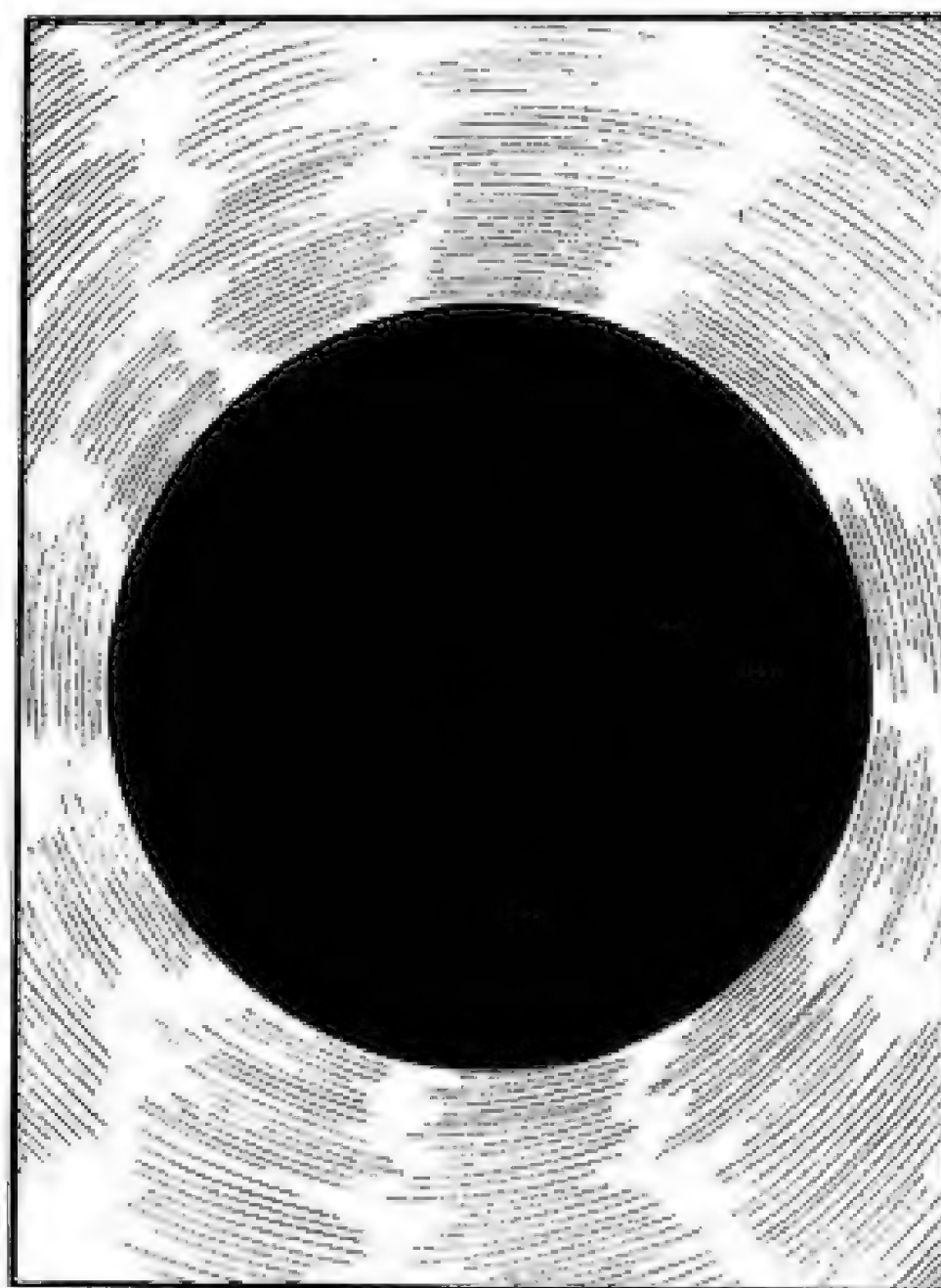
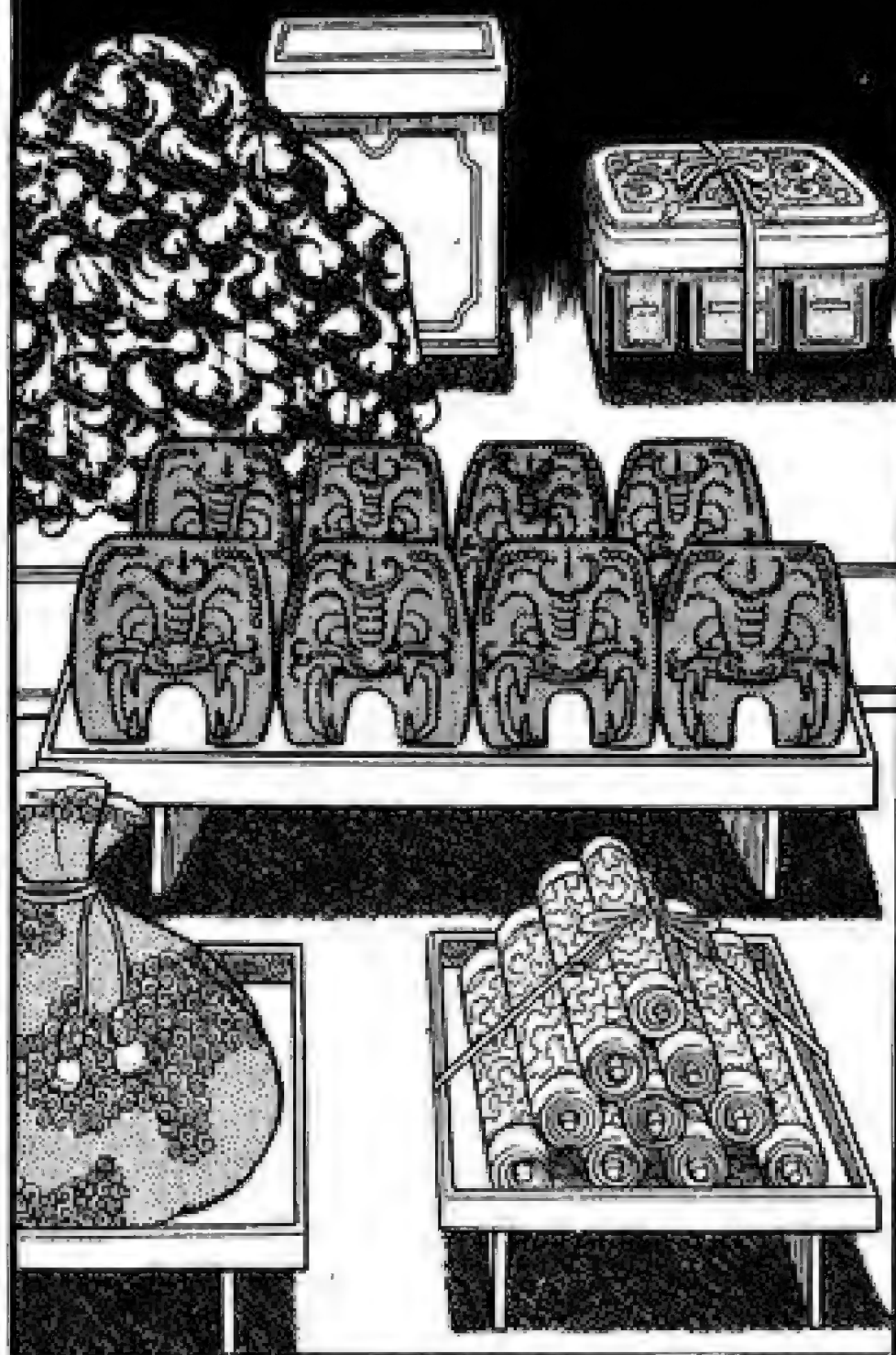
ON THE OTHER HAND, GAO'S GARGOYLES WERE PLACED ALONG WITH OTHER GIFTS IN A STOREHOUSE NORTH OF THE PAVILIONS.



AT THAT TIME THERE WERE TWO STOREHOUSES: ONE TO THE NORTH AND ONE TO THE SOUTH. THEY WERE BOTH CALLED THE SHOSOIN.

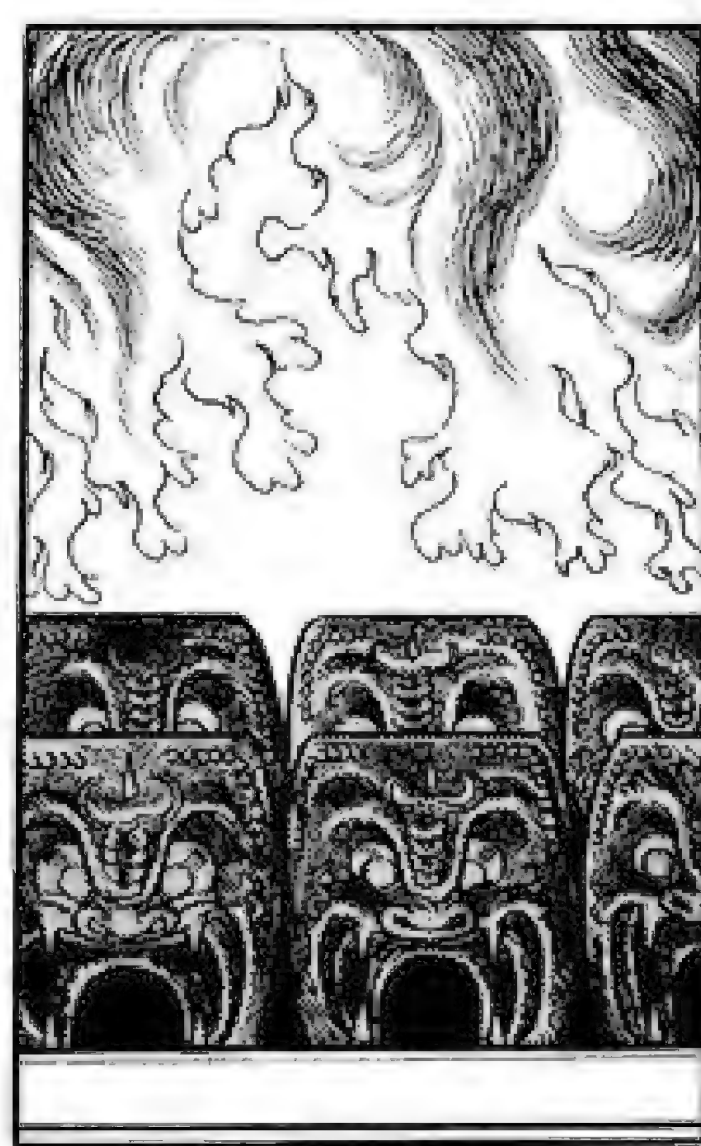


"SHOSOIN" REFERRED TO ANY STOREROOM OF IMPORTANT TREASURES AND GIFTS. THE SHOSOIN WHICH REMAINS TODAY BECAME FAMOUS WHEN EMPRESS SEIME MADE THE BUILDING THE OFFICIAL STOREROOM OF EMPEROR SHOMU'S BELONGINGS ON THE 49TH DAY AFTER HIS DEATH IN 756 A.D. THUS THE TILES OF GAO, PLUS ALL OF THE ARTICLES PREVIOUSLY PLACED IN THE NORTHERN STOREROOM, BECAME CAREFULLY PROTECTED TREASURES.

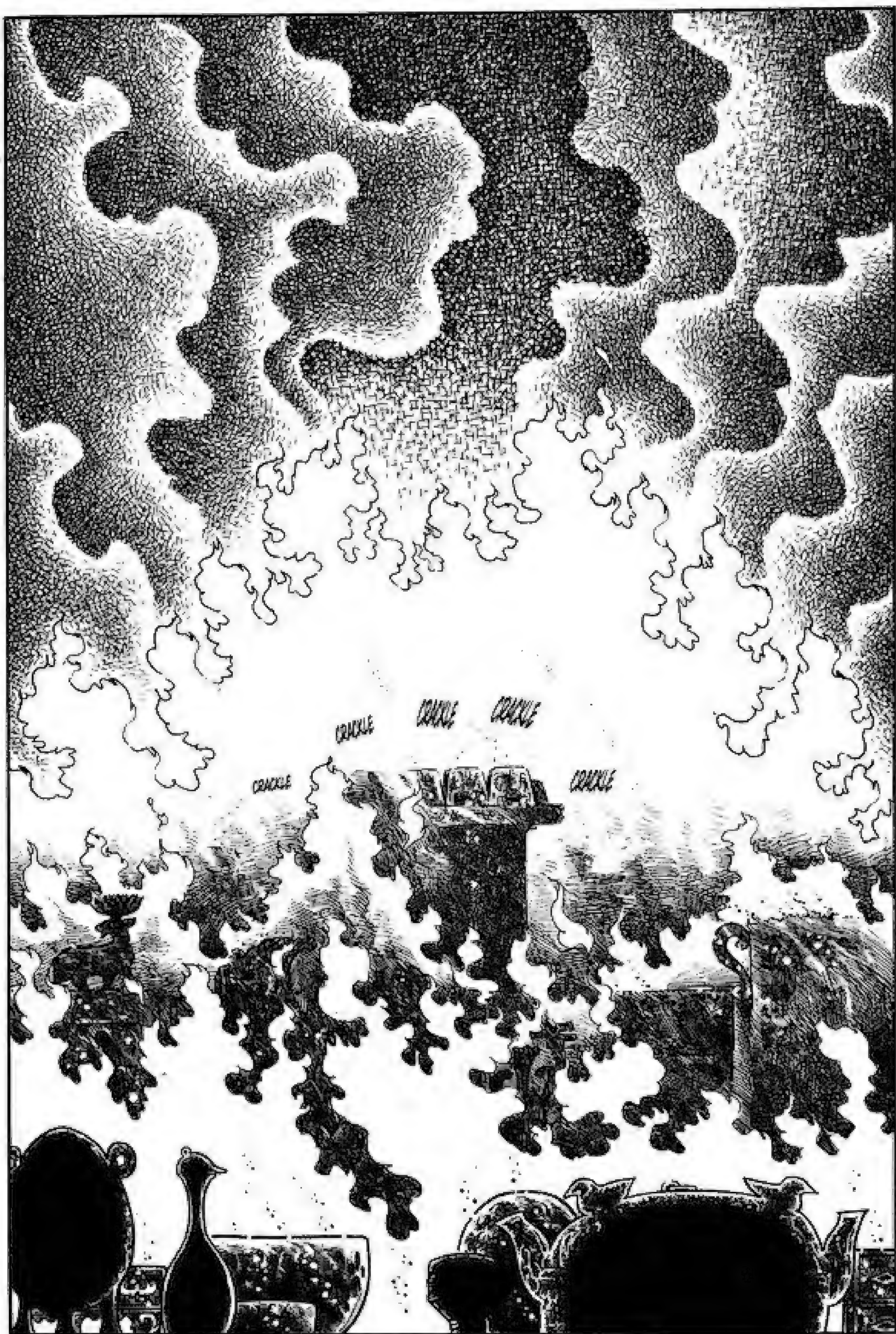


THE  
DROUGHT  
WORSENER

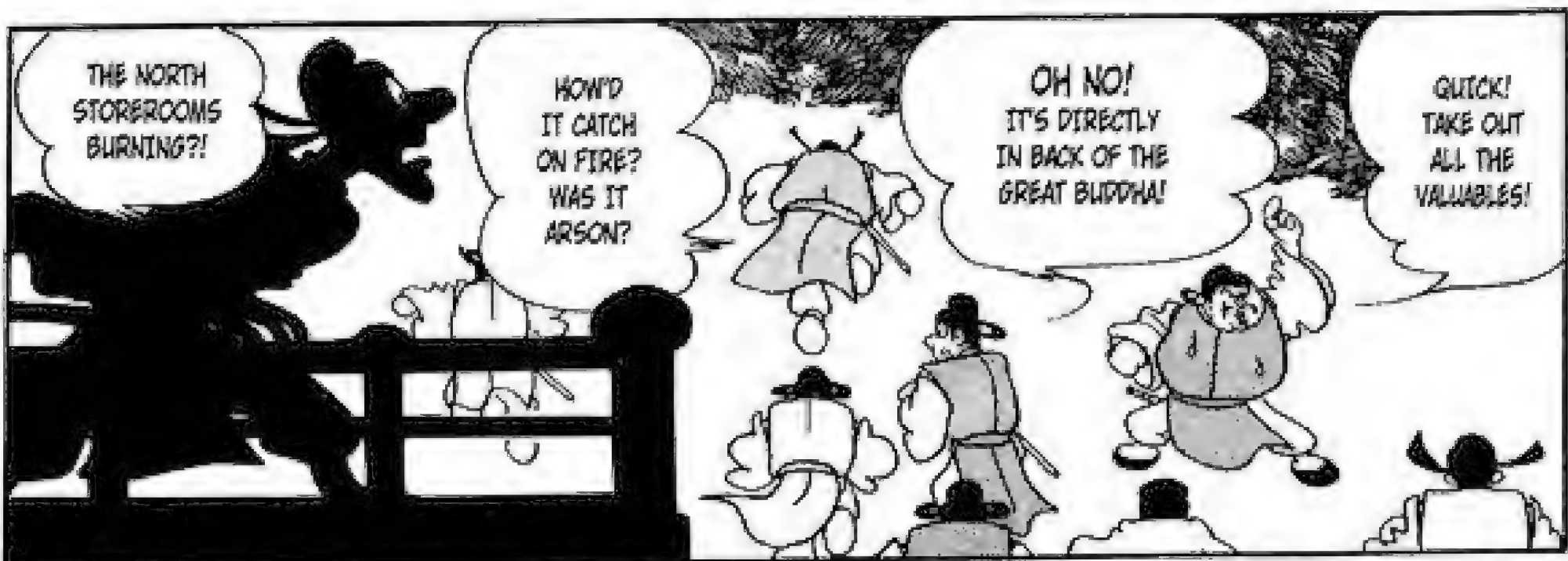
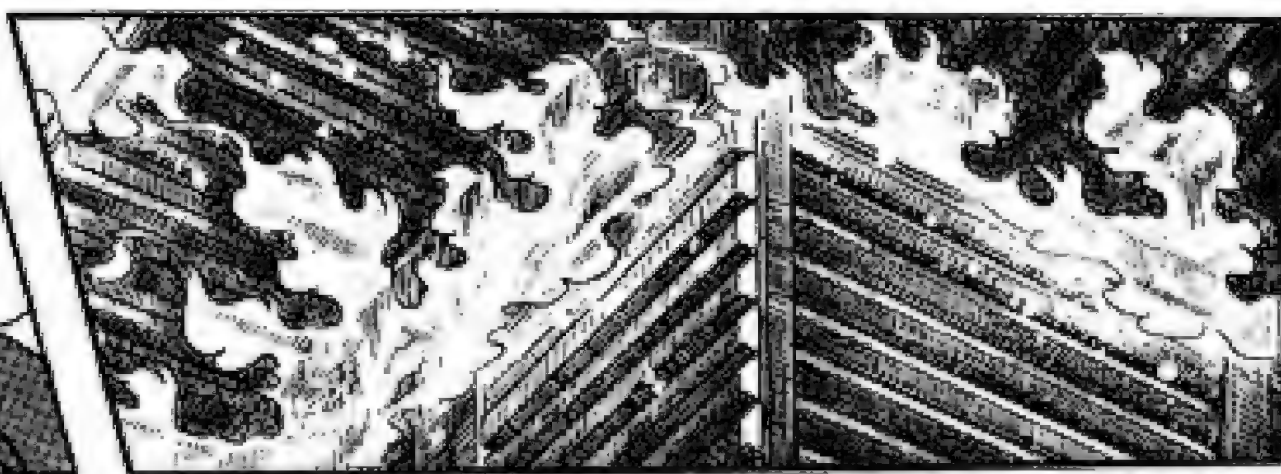
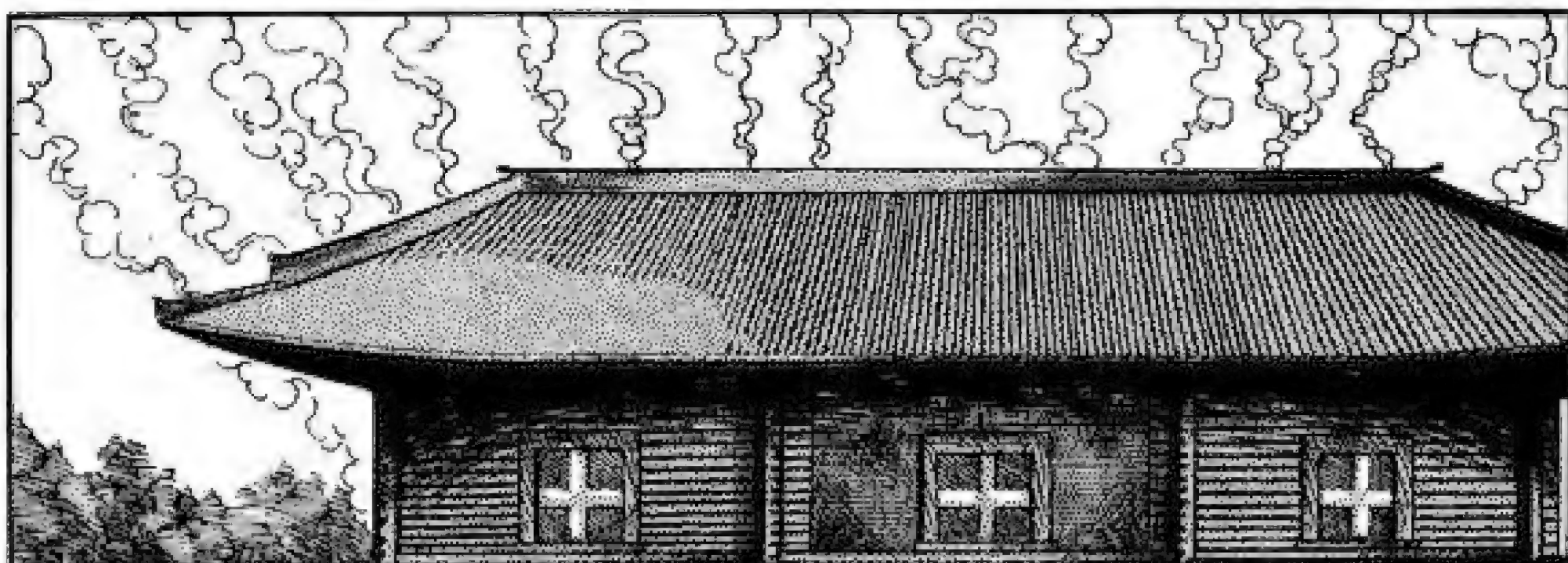
















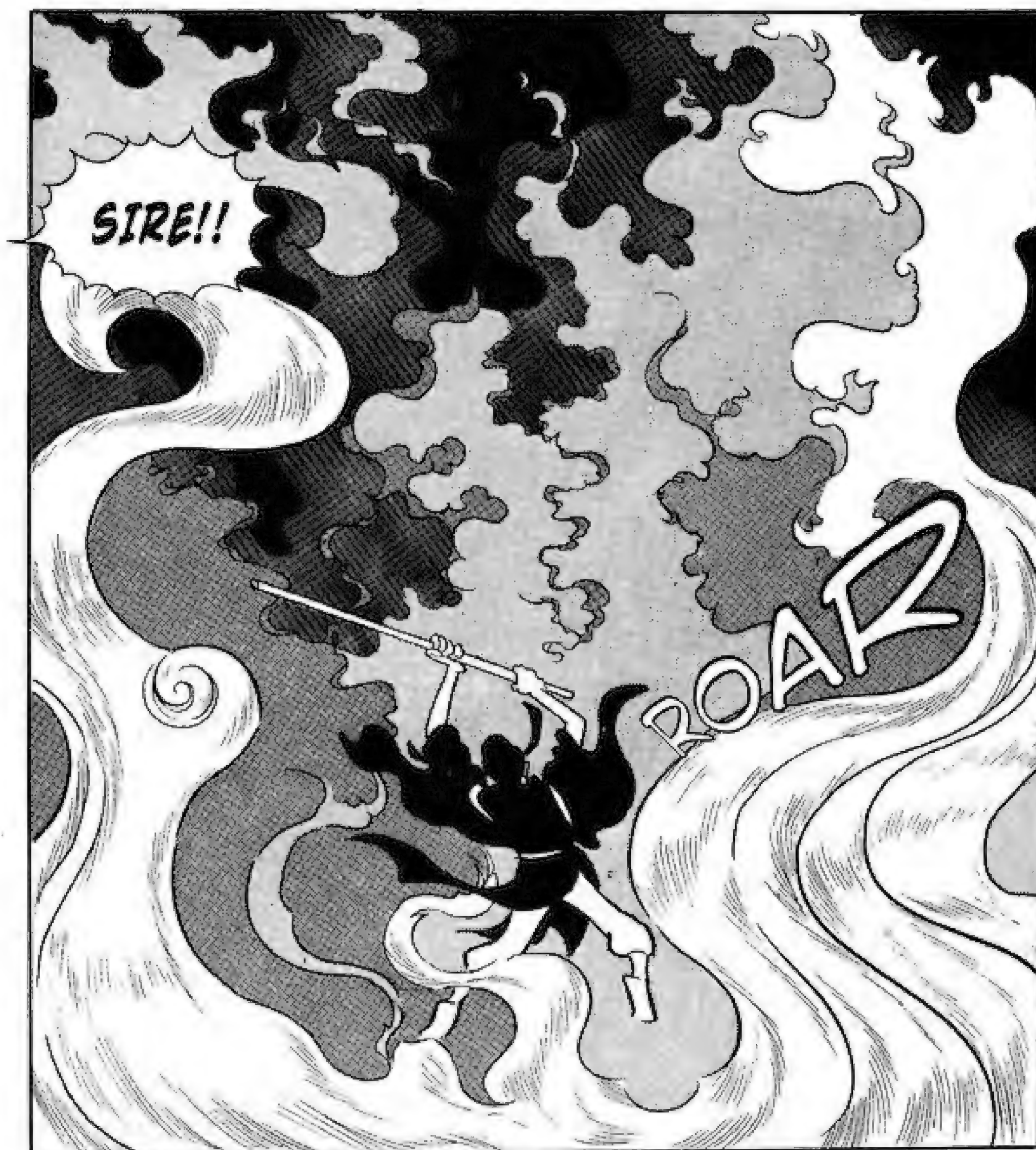




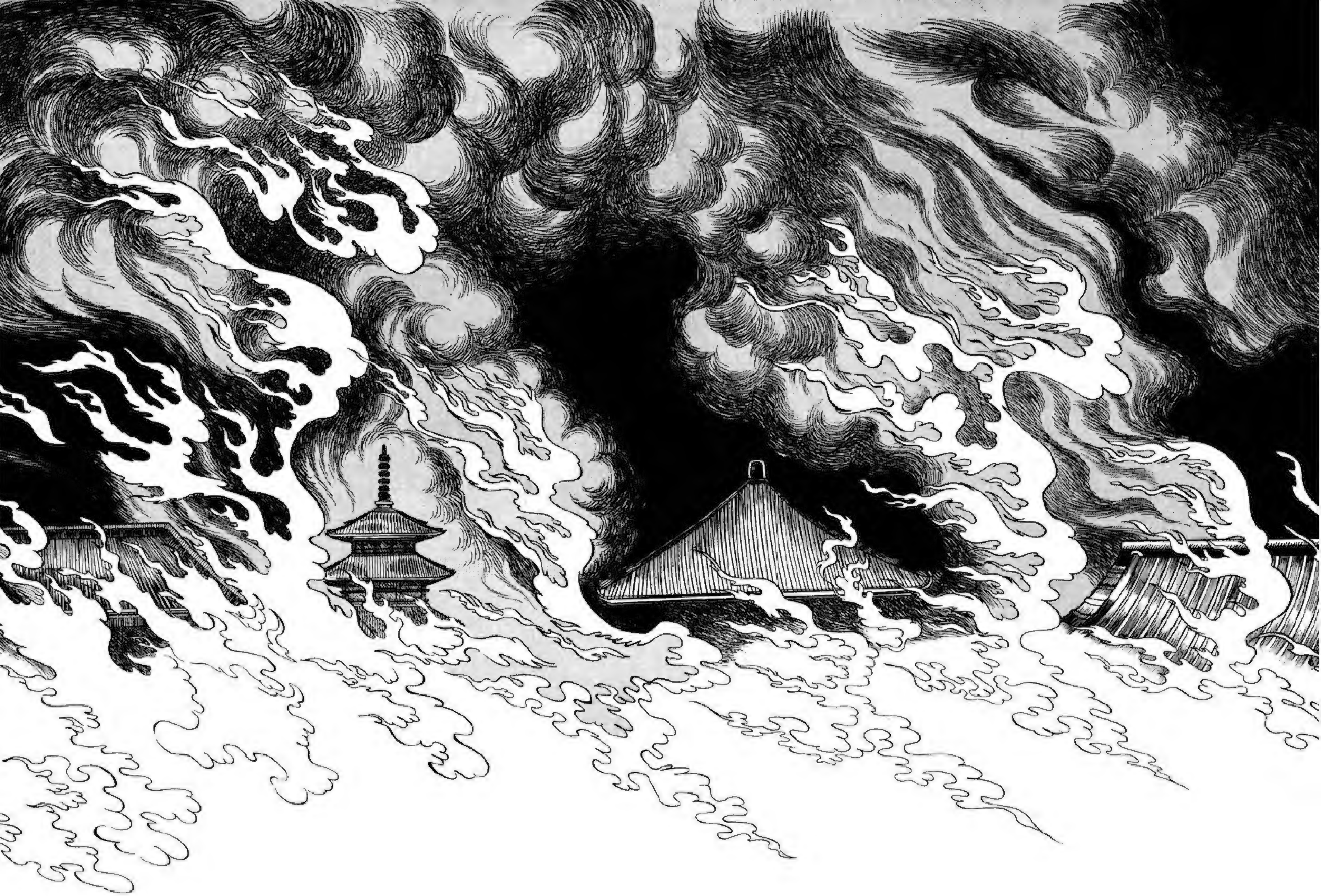




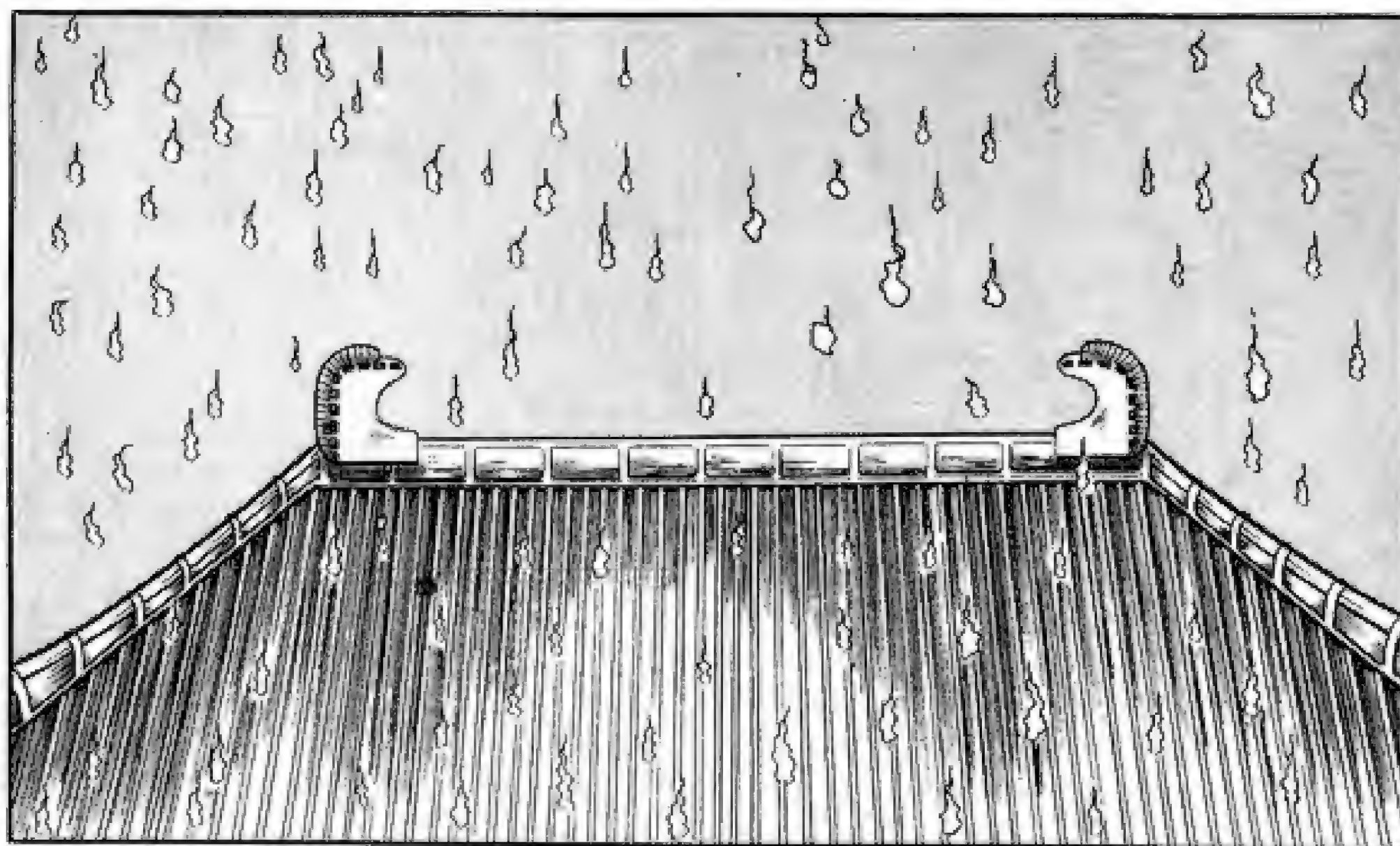
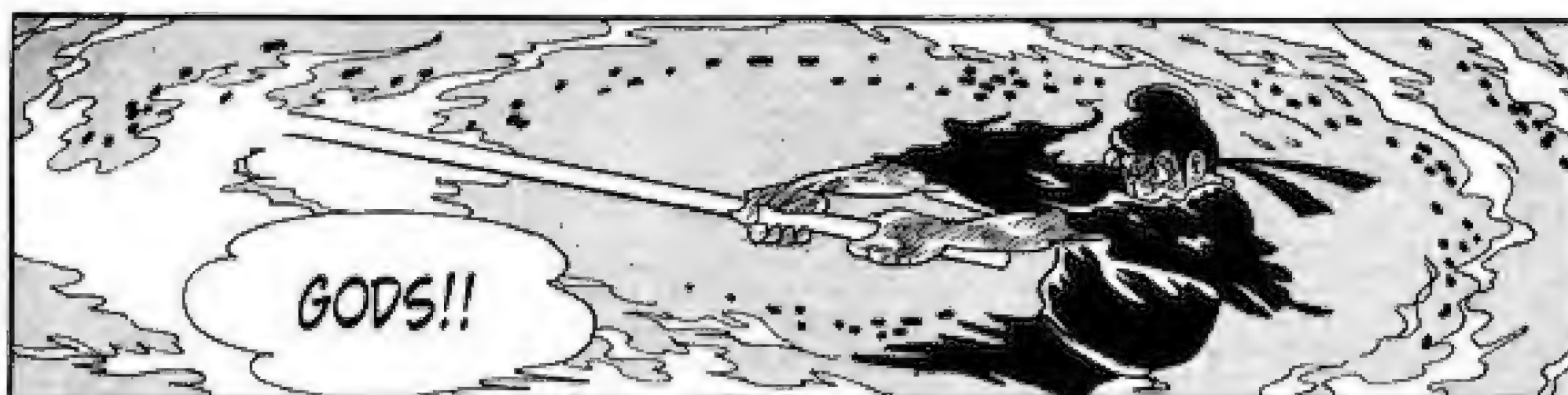
















AH! THE PHOENIX...  
SHE'S DANCING IN THE  
FIRE! SHE'S EXACTLY  
LIKE THE ONE I SAW  
IN MY DREAM! IT'S TRUE,  
SHE REALLY EXISTS!

SO SHE WAS  
HERE ALL THE  
TIME... WHY  
DIDN'T I SEE  
HER BEFORE?!



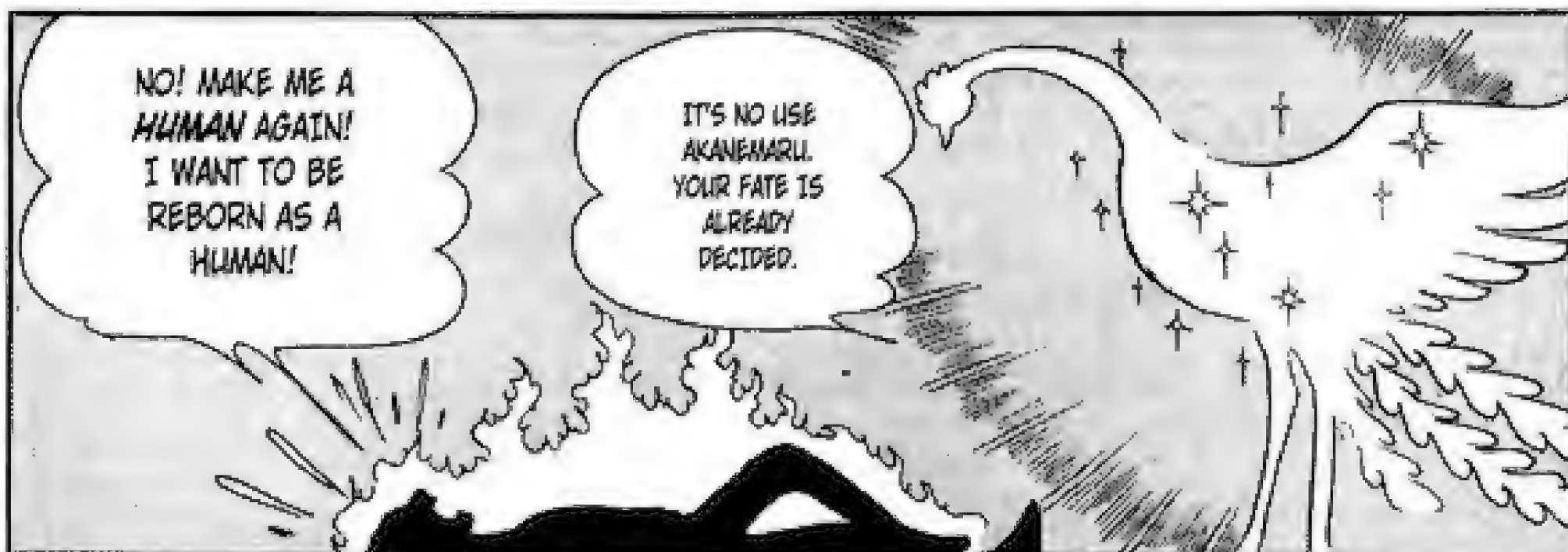
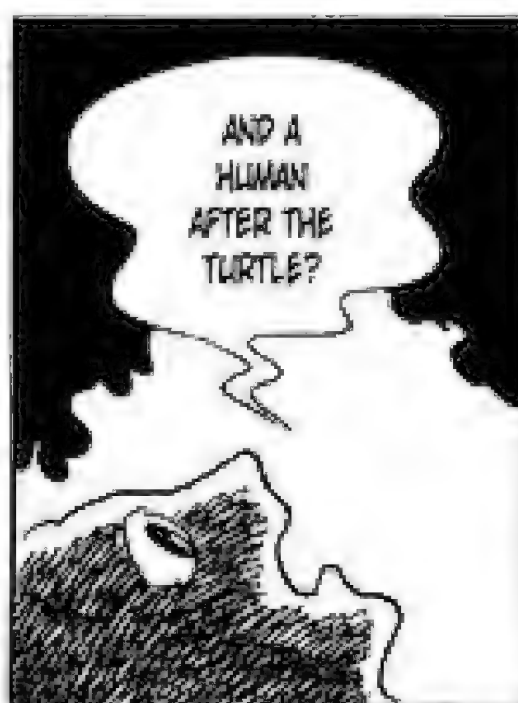
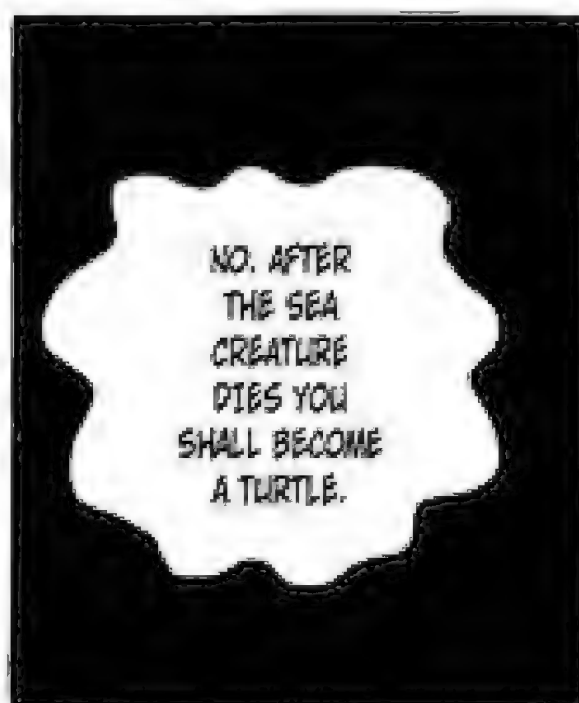
HOW  
BEAUTI-  
FUL!

I'LL CARVE HER...  
I'LL MAKE IT THE  
BEST WORK I'VE  
EVER DONE!



IT'S TOO LATE,  
AKANEMARU.  
YOU'RE GOING  
TO DIE.

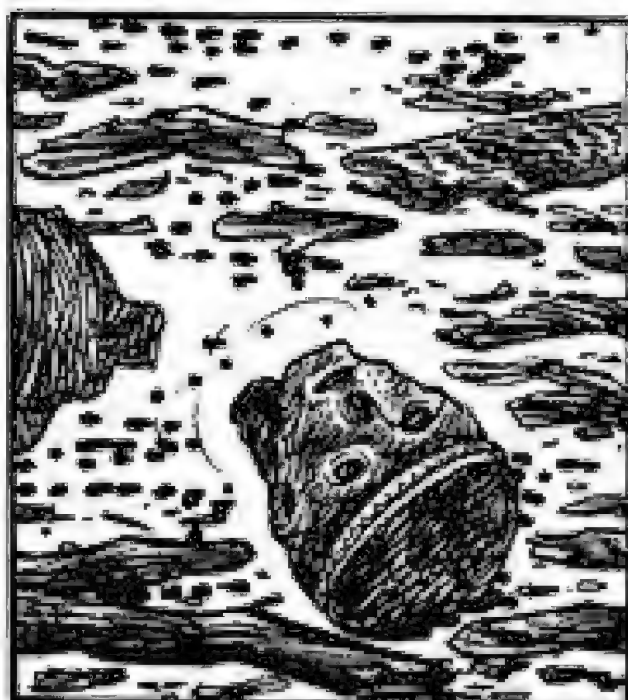
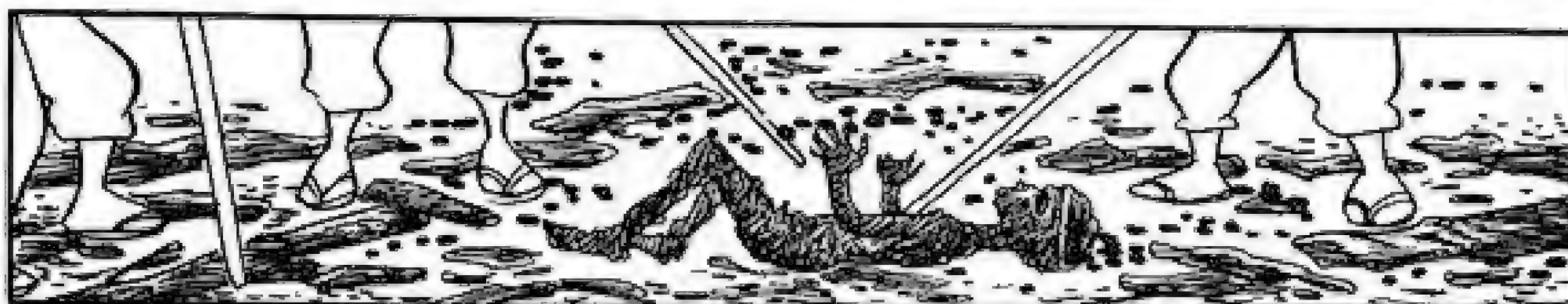












JUDGING BY  
THE GOLD  
BAND AROUND  
THE SKULL, I'D  
SAY THIS IS  
AKANEMARU.

NAWA-  
MIDA  
BATSU  
....

POOR  
FELLOW  
...  
NO LUCK  
....



DIDN'T  
HE HAVE  
ANY  
FAMILY?

NEVER  
HEARD  
OF ANY  
....



WAIT!  
I'M A  
RELATIVE  
OF HIS!

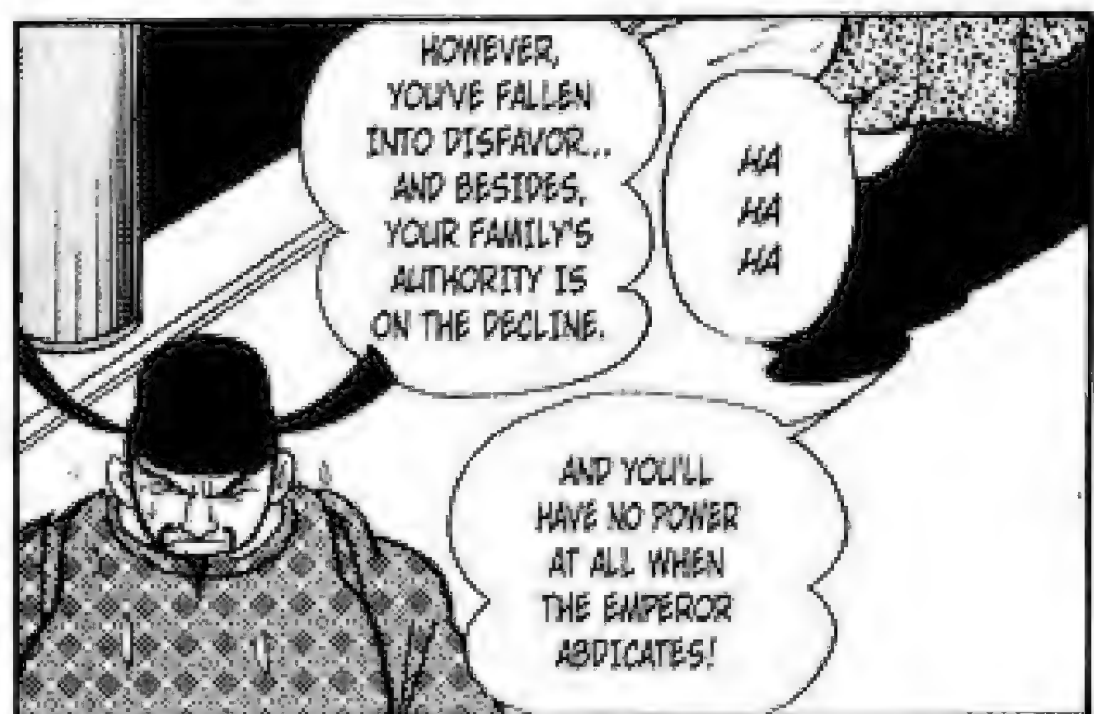
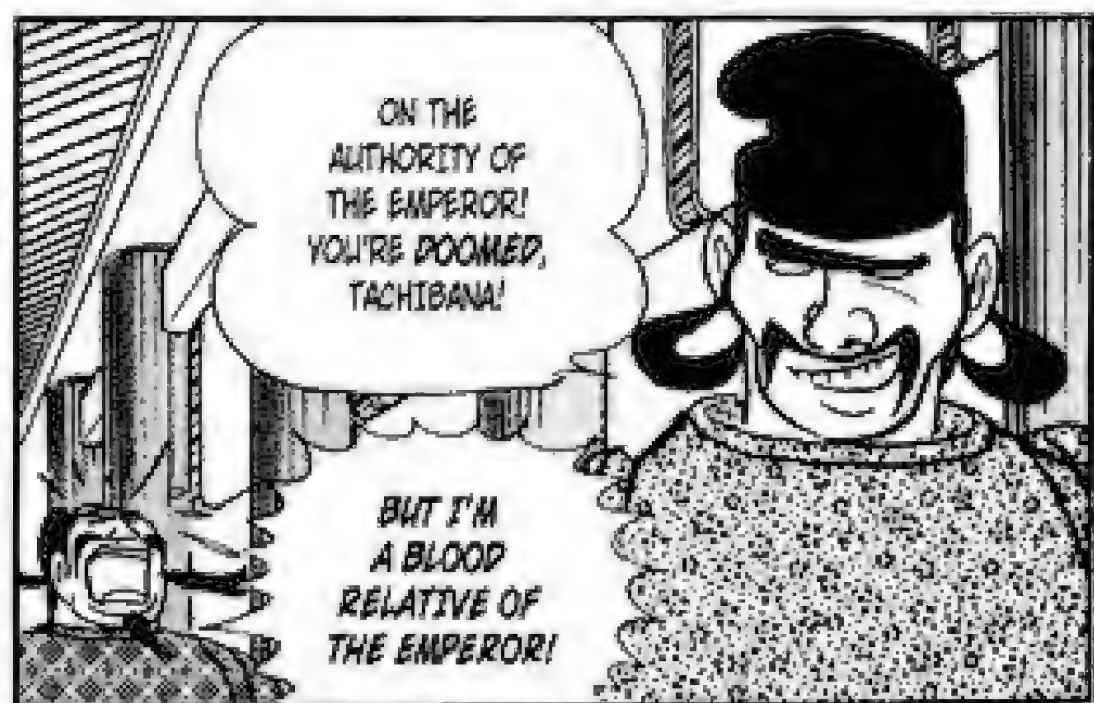
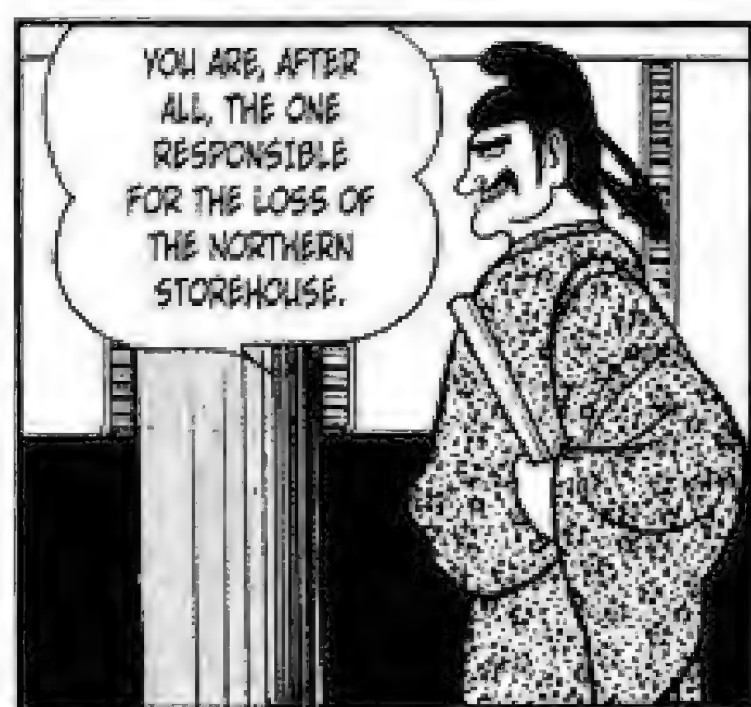
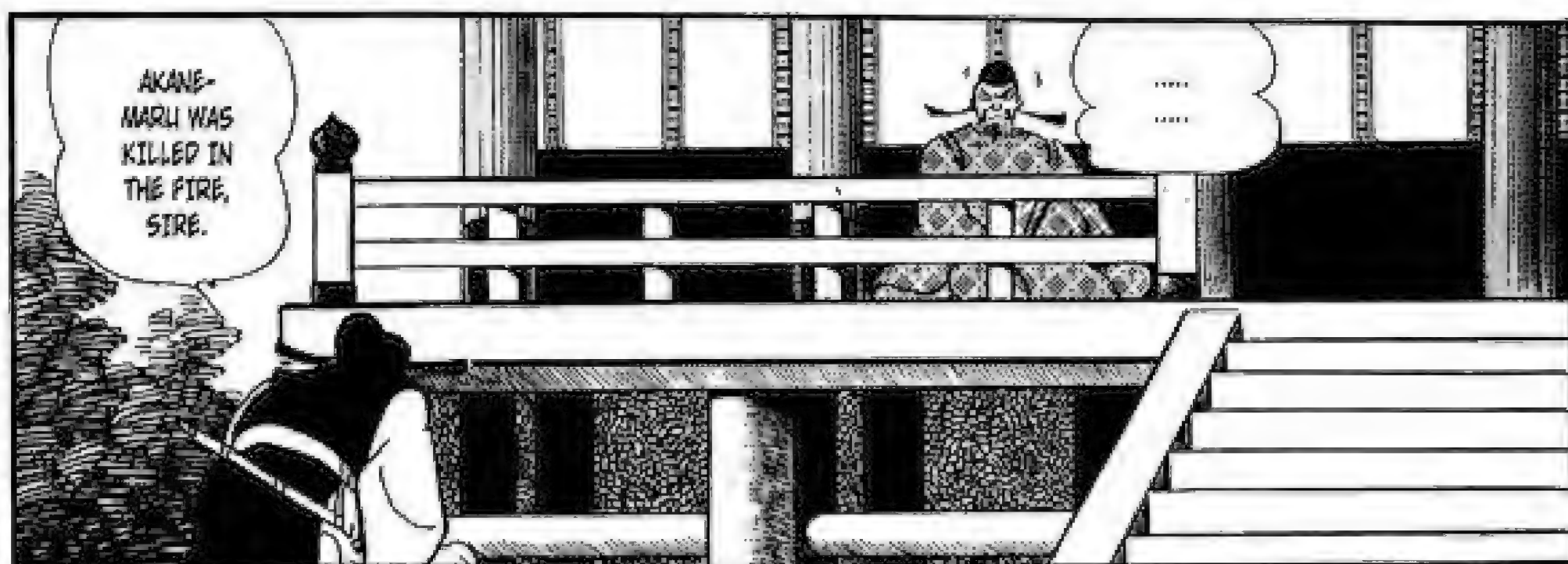










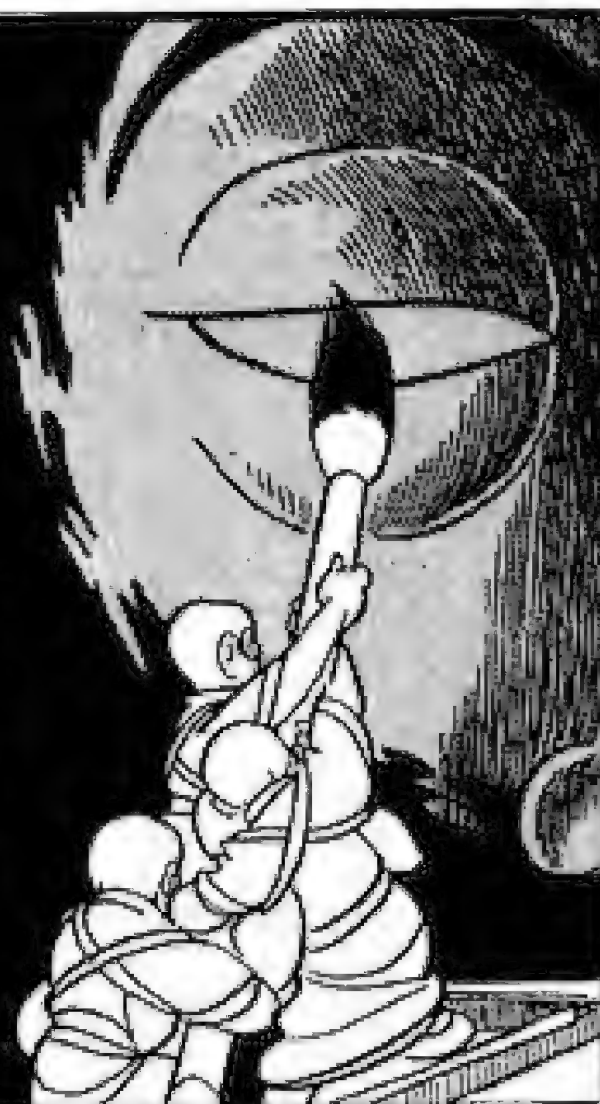








ON THE 9TH DAY  
OF THE 4TH MONTH,  
752 A.D., THE  
CEREMONY OF THE  
PAINTING IN THE  
BUDDHA'S EYES TO  
COMMEMORATE  
COMPLETION OF THE  
STATUE WAS ATTENDED  
BY THE CLOISTERED\*  
EMPEROR SHOWA, HIS  
HEIR EMPEROR KOKEN,  
AND THE FORMER  
EMPRESS KOMEI, AND  
30,000 BUDDHIST  
MONKS AND SCHOLARS.  
IT WAS, ULTIMATELY,  
AN EXERCISE IN  
NATIONALISM.

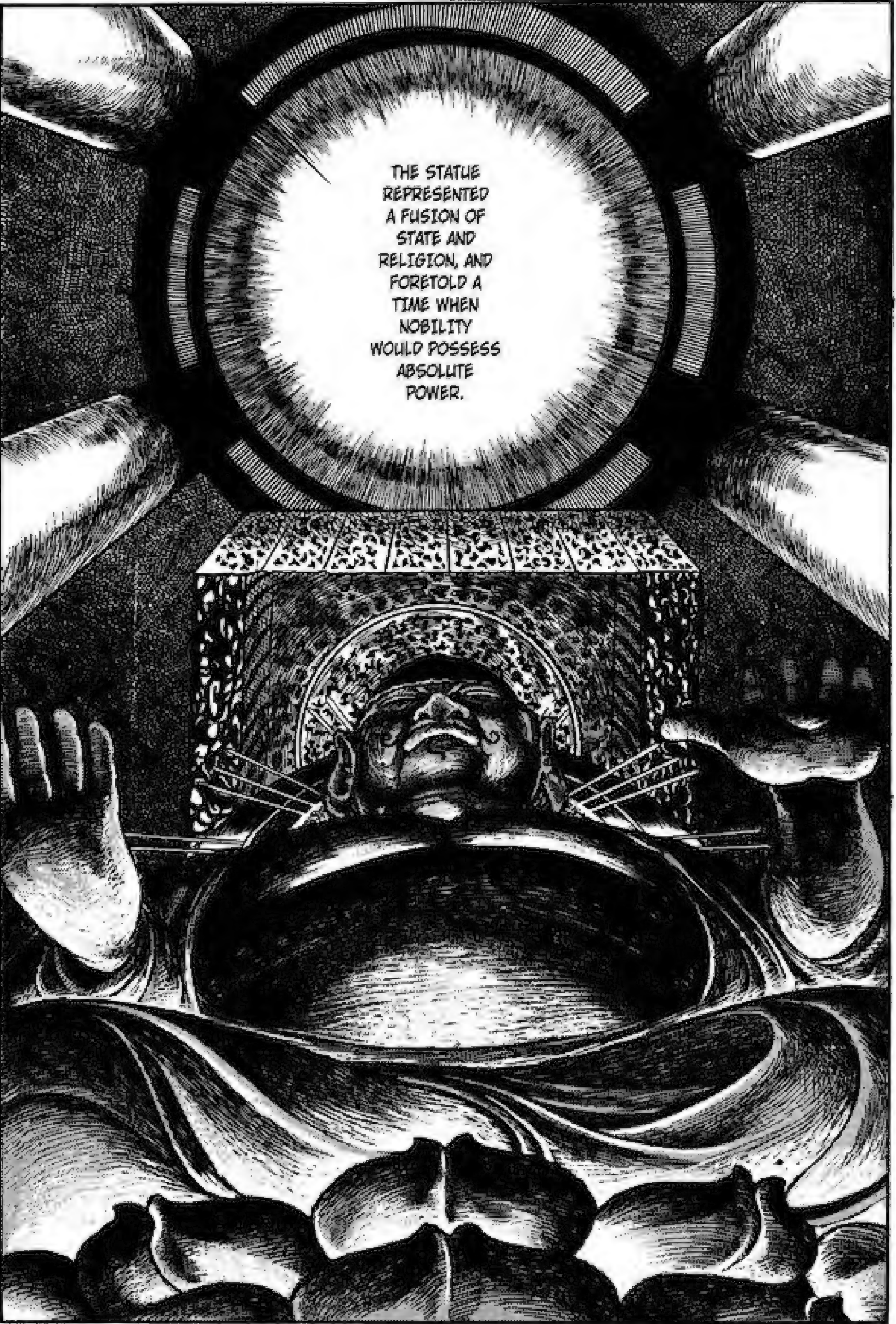


\*REFERS TO AN EMPEROR WHO HAS ABDICATED HIS THRONE.

WITH HIS  
NEW EYES, THE  
BUDDHA APPEARED  
TO GLARE AT THE  
ASSEMBLED MASSES  
LIKE A DARUMA  
DOLL ON  
ELECTION DAY.\*

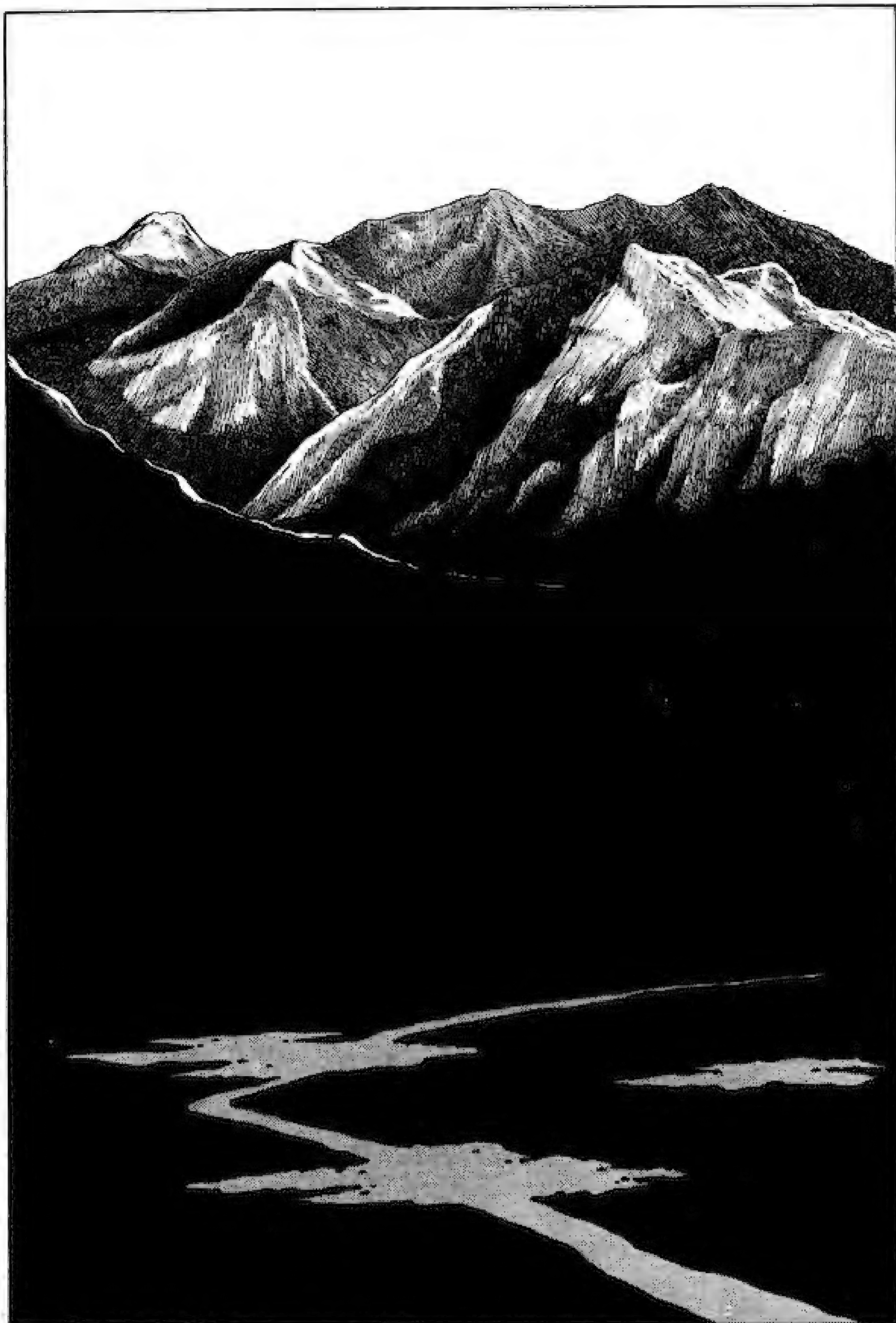




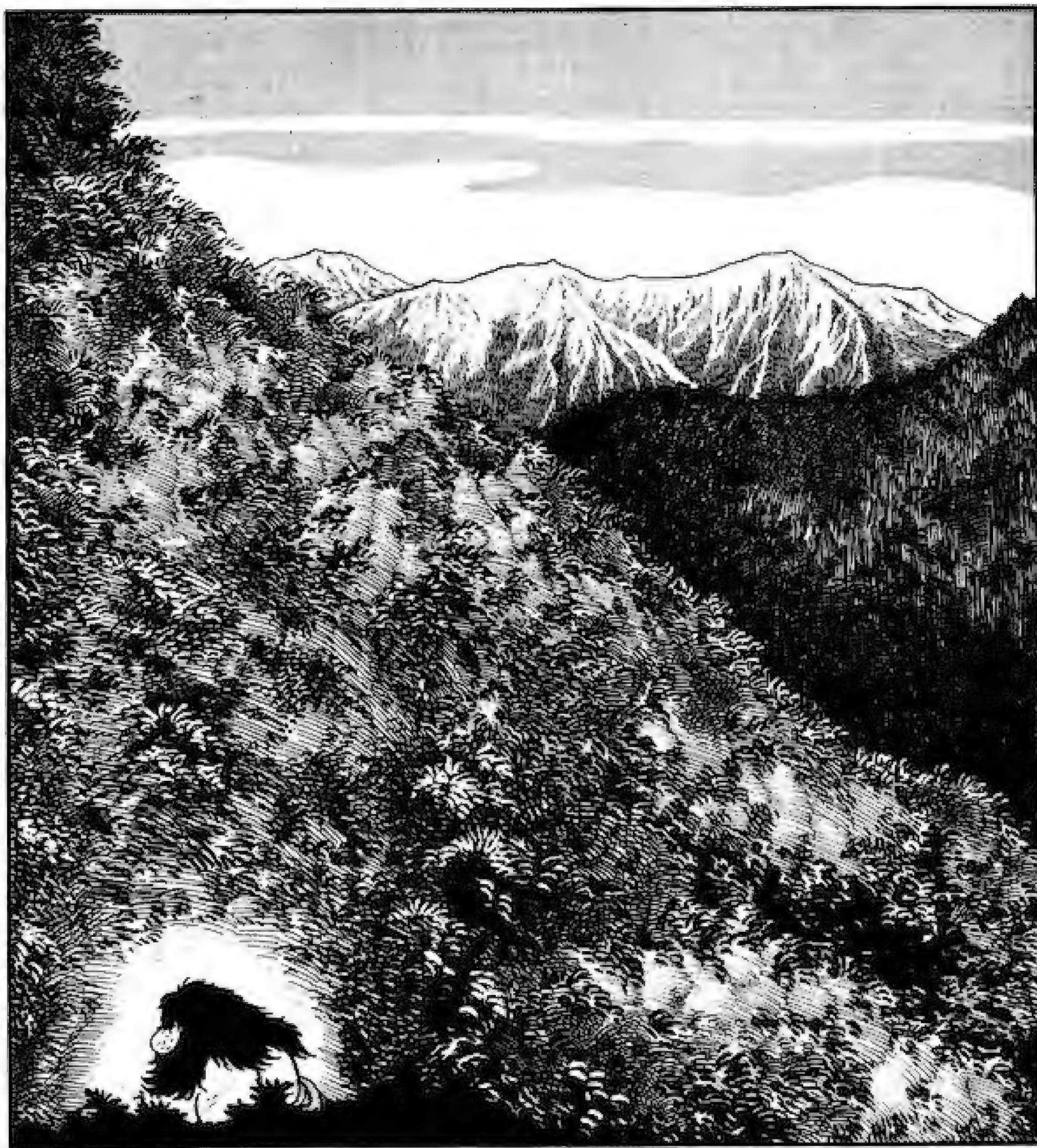


THE STATUE  
REPRESENTED  
A FUSION OF  
STATE AND  
RELIGION, AND  
FORETOLD A  
TIME WHEN  
NOBILITY  
WOULD POSSESS  
ABSOLUTE  
POWER.

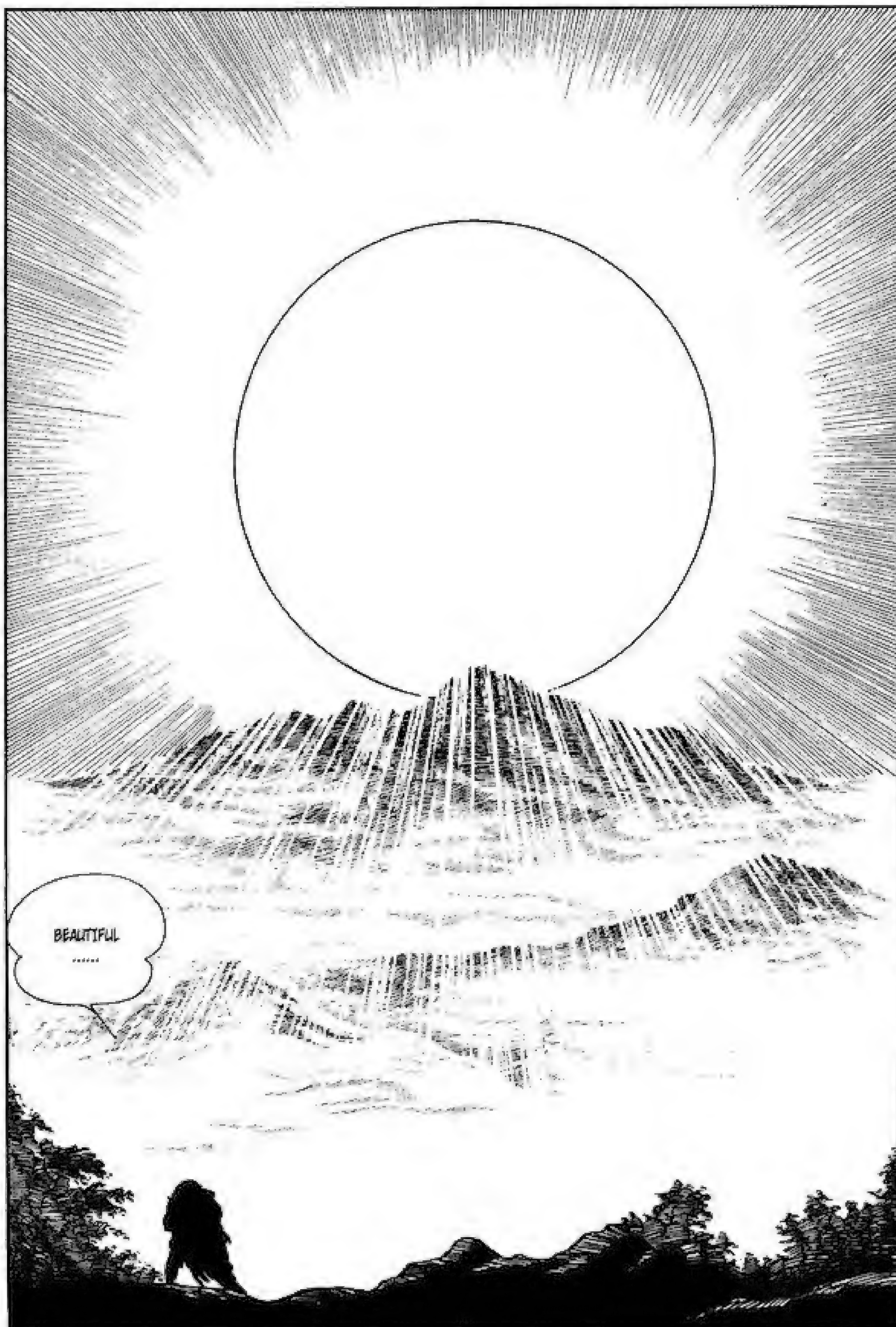


















WHY DO  
I CRY  
NOW?

WHY IS  
THE WORLD  
SO  
BEAUTIFUL?

BECAUSE  
HERE...  
EVERYTHING  
IS ALIVE!

ALIVE!  
THAT'S  
WHY!



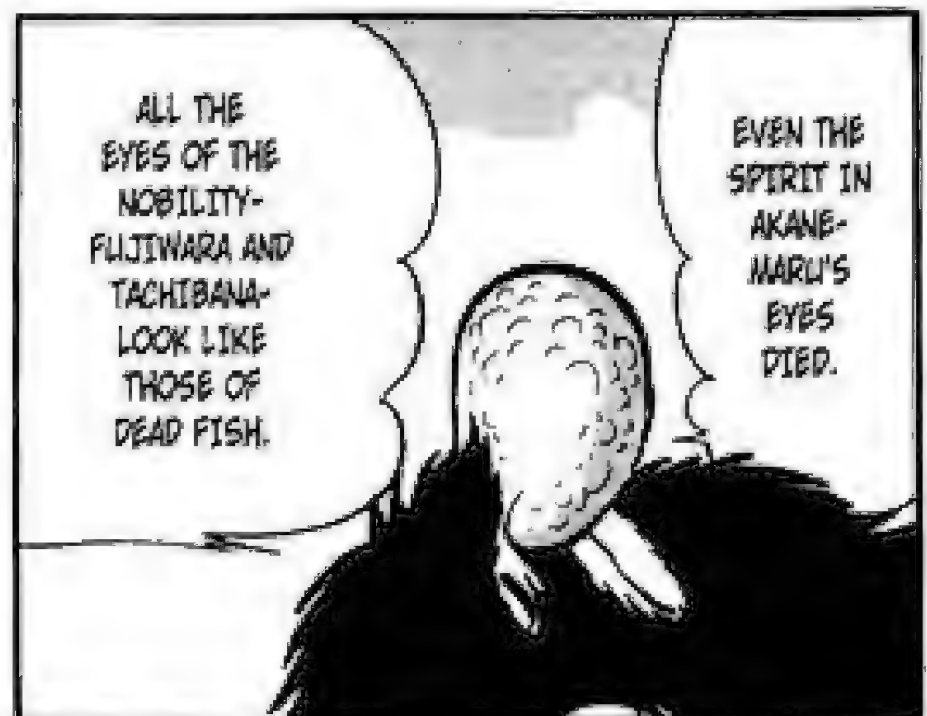
ALL THIS  
LIFE IN THE  
MIDST OF A  
DRAUGHT!

AFTER  
VISITING THE  
CAPITAL, I  
UNDERSTAND  
WELL.....



ALL THE  
EYES OF THE  
NOBILITY-  
FUJIWARA AND  
TACHIBANA-  
LOOK LIKE  
THOSE OF  
DEAD FISH.

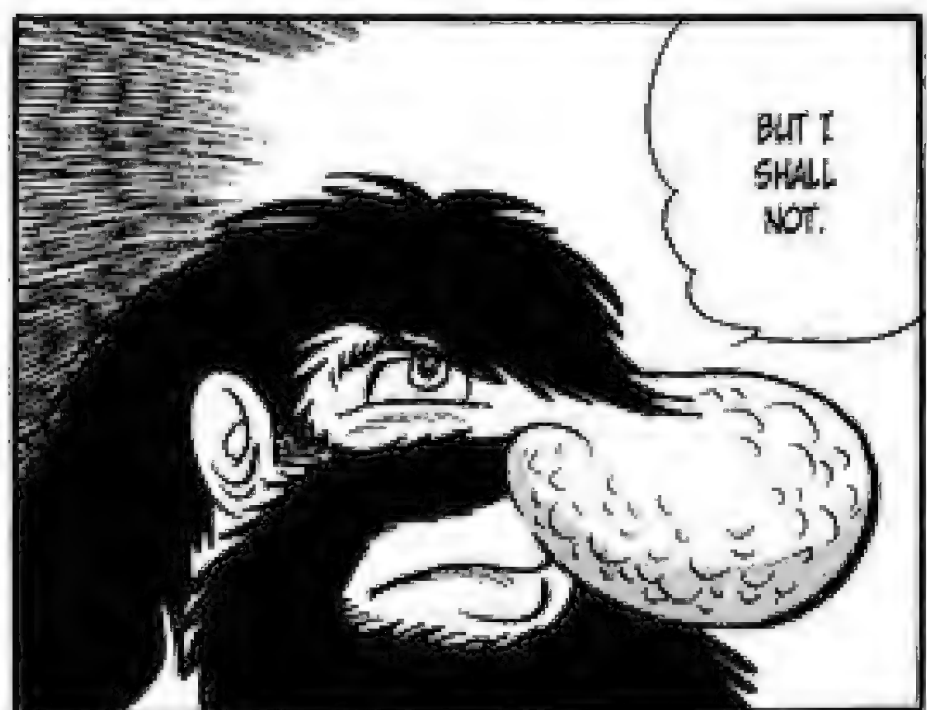
EVEN THE  
SPIRIT IN  
AKANE-  
MARU'S  
EYES  
DIED.



MASTER ROSEN-  
I NOW UNDER-  
STAND WHY YOU  
FLED THIS  
WORLD.

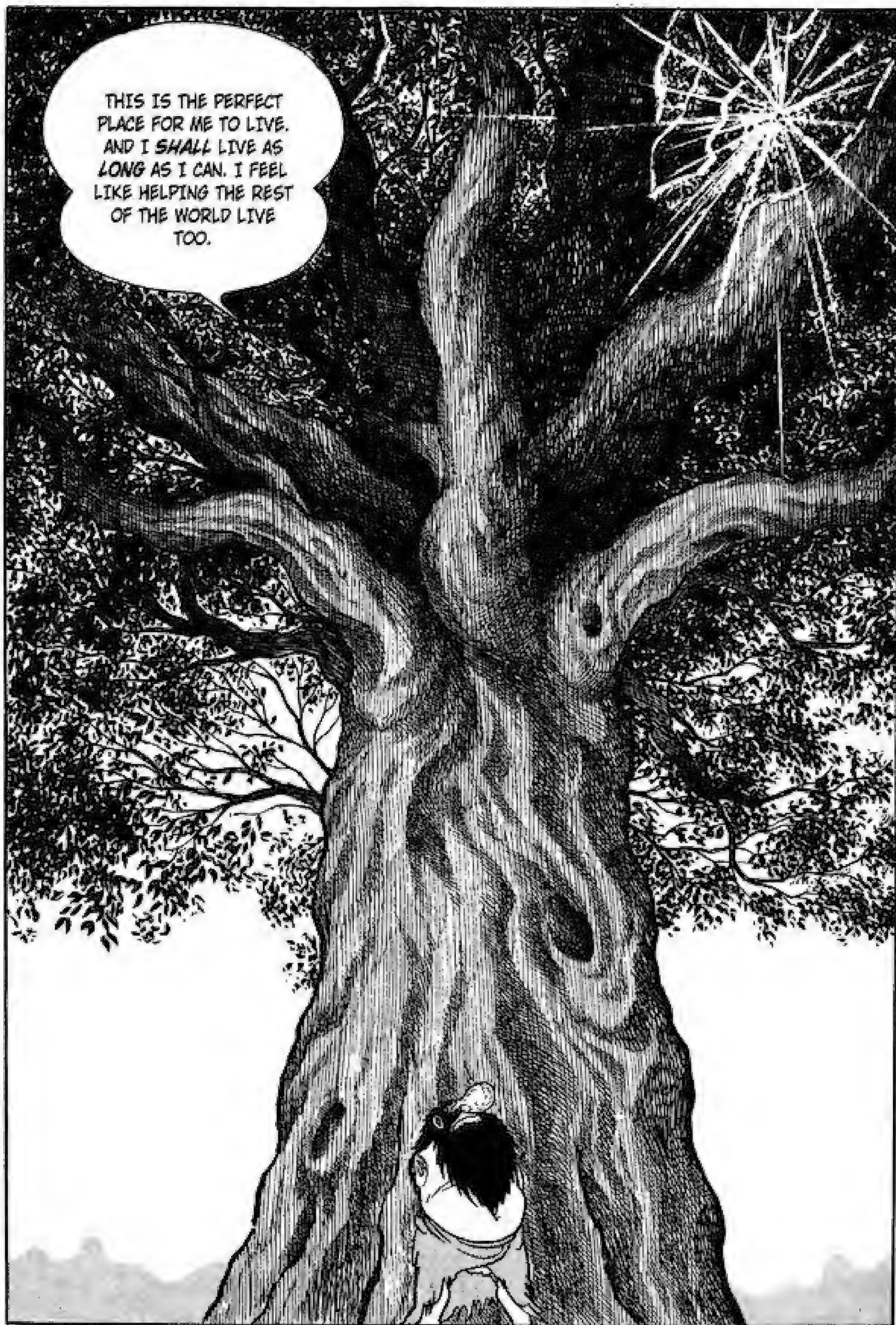


BUT I  
SHALL  
NOT.





THIS IS THE PERFECT  
PLACE FOR ME TO LIVE.  
AND I SHALL LIVE AS  
LONG AS I CAN. I FEEL  
LIKE HELPING THE REST  
OF THE WORLD LIVE  
TOO.











WHO  
ARE  
YOU  
?!



WHOSE  
REMAINS  
ARE  
THESE  
?

IT'S MY  
BROTHER...  
AKANEMARU.



I  
NEED  
A  
PRIEST  
....

WOULD  
YOU HOLD  
A BURIAL  
SERVICE  
FOR THIS  
?!



AKANE-  
MARU  
....

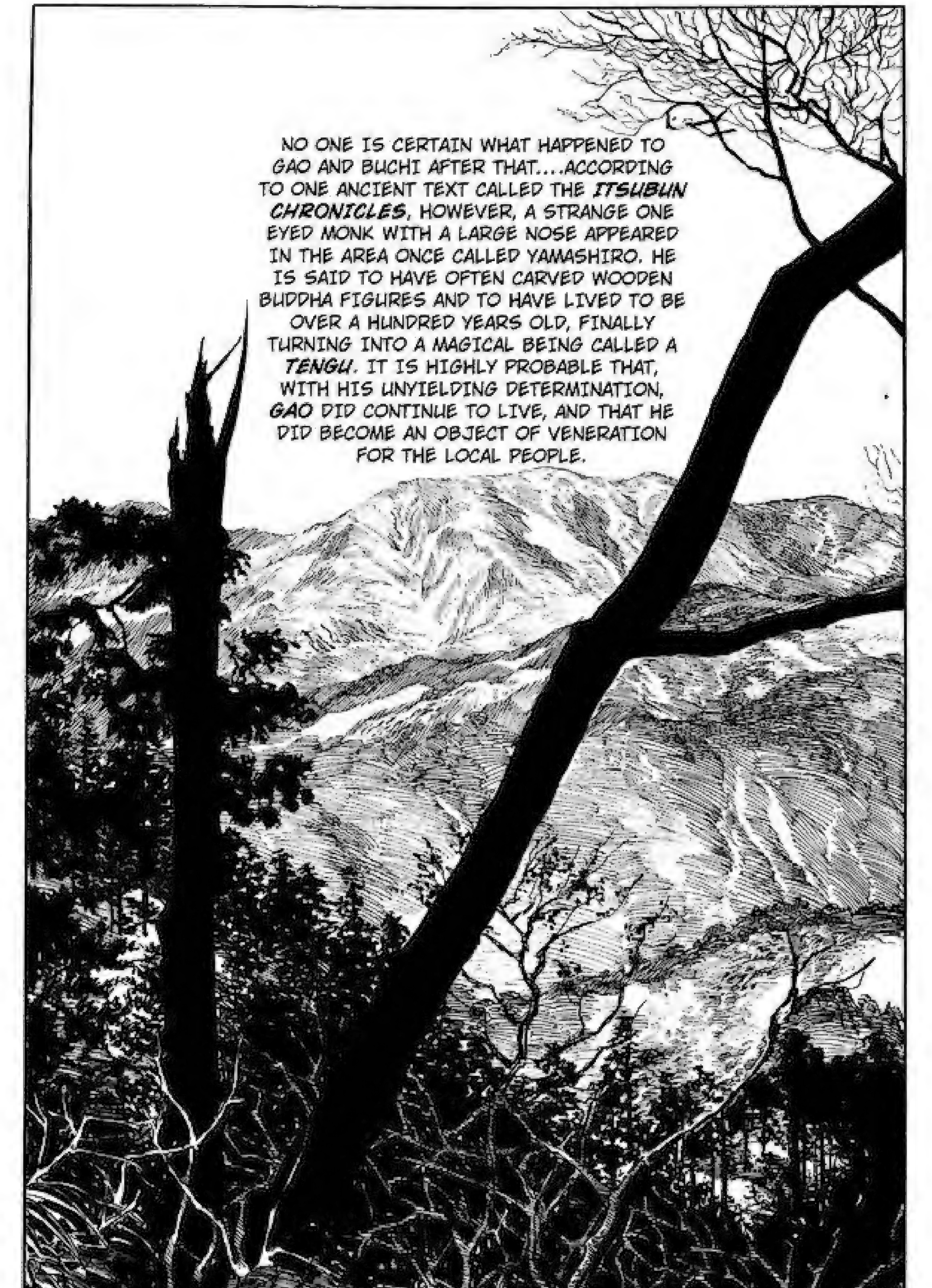


I WANT TO  
LIVE BESIDE  
HIS GRAVE.

THEN  
COME  
WITH ME.

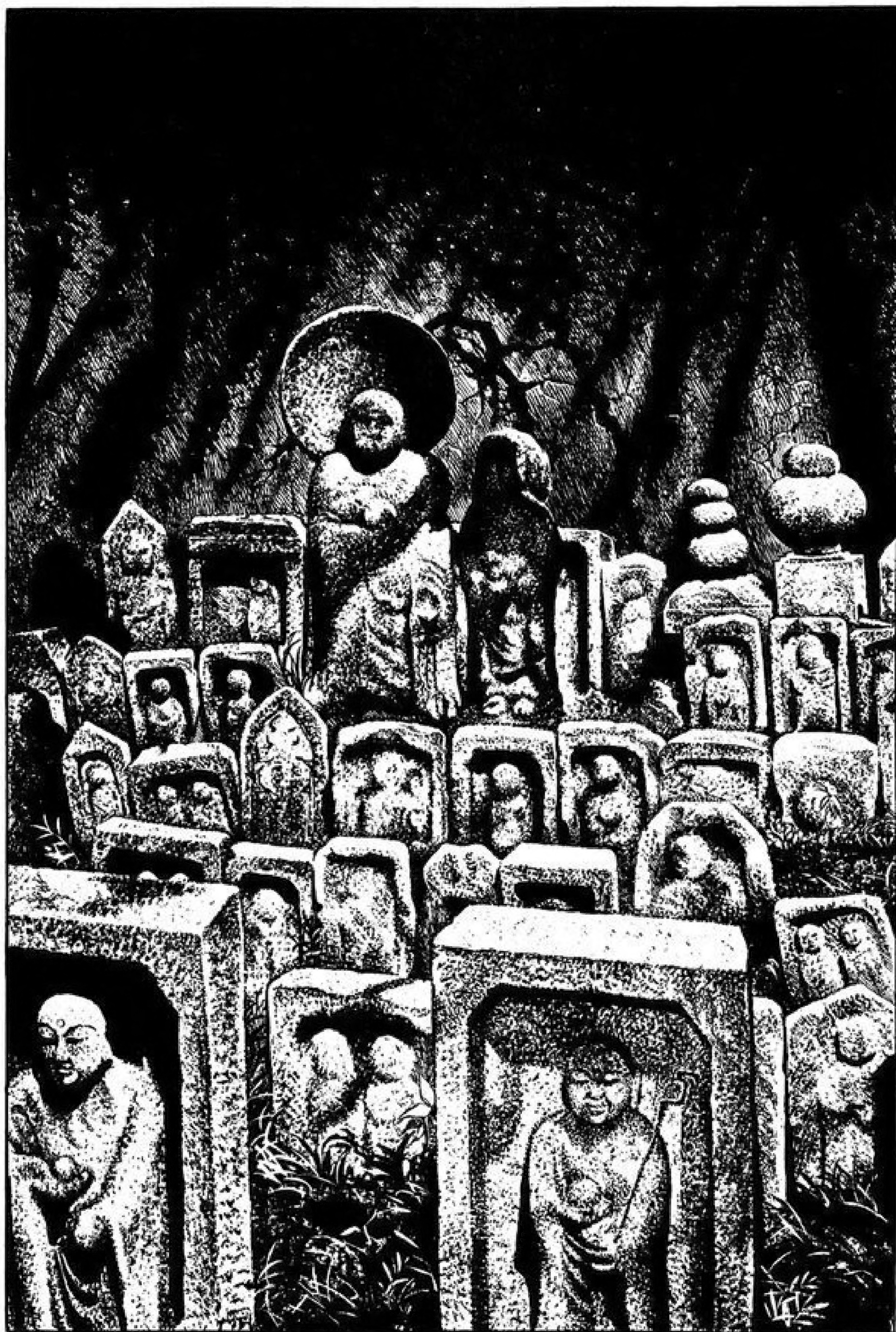






NO ONE IS CERTAIN WHAT HAPPENED TO GAO AND BUCHI AFTER THAT....ACCORDING TO ONE ANCIENT TEXT CALLED THE *ITSUBUN CHRONICLES*, HOWEVER, A STRANGE ONE EYED MONK WITH A LARGE NOSE APPEARED IN THE AREA ONCE CALLED YAMASHIRO. HE IS SAID TO HAVE OFTEN CARVED WOODEN BUDDHA FIGURES AND TO HAVE LIVED TO BE OVER A HUNDRED YEARS OLD, FINALLY TURNING INTO A MAGICAL BEING CALLED A *TENGU*. IT IS HIGHLY PROBABLE THAT, WITH HIS UNYIELDING DETERMINATION, GAO DID CONTINUE TO LIVE, AND THAT HE DID BECOME AN OBJECT OF VENERATION FOR THE LOCAL PEOPLE.











# ABOUT THIS EDITION OF *PHOENIX*: *KARMA*

The twelve self-contained yet interlinked stories that compose *Phoenix* (*Hi no tori* in Japanese, literally “Firebird”) is considered by many to be the summit of Osamu Tezuka’s artistic achievement. Tezuka himself referred to *Phoenix* as his “life work.” Painstakingly composed over a span of decades (initial versions appeared as early as 1954), serialized in a number of venues, and left incomplete with Tezuka’s death in 1989, *Phoenix* represents Tezuka’s ambitious attempt to push all he knew about the comics medium to address fundamental questions about existence.

All twelve stories in *Phoenix* are linked by the presence of the mythical bird, an immortal guardian of the universal life force. Read in order the separate stories jump across time, alternating between a distant future and a distant past, converging on the present, with characters from one story being reincarnated in another. The existing twelve stories, totaling over three thousand pages of work, are subtitled “Dawn,” “Future,” “Yamato,” “Space,” “Karma,” “Resurrection,” “Robe of Feathers,” “Nostalgia,” “Civil War,” “Life,” “Strange Beings,” and “Sun.”

This edition, *Phoenix: Karma* is an English translation of the fifth of the twelve *Phoenix* stories. The original title for this volume is “Hou oh”, which is the Chinese kanji for “Phoenix” or bird of fire. This edition is based on the translation by Dadakai, who had named the volume “Karma”. This story was first serialized from August 1969 to September 1970 in the monthly magazine *COM*, which was published by Tezuka as a venue to feature work too challenging or experimental for inclusion in mainstream manga magazines. The first, second and third volume of the series, *Phoenix: Dawn*, *Phoenix: A Tale of the Future*, and *Phoenix: Yamato/Space*, respectively, were published in English by VIZ. For more information on *Phoenix* and Osamu Tezuka consult Frederik L. Schodt’s excellent *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* and *Dreamland Japan Writings on Modern Manga*.

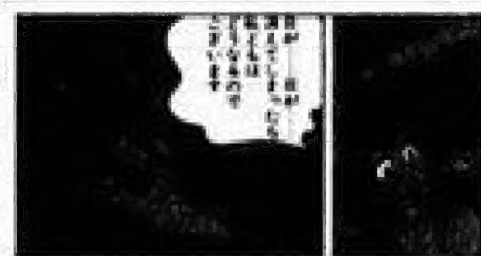


# A Journey through Time and Space: An Overview of the Complete *Phoenix* Saga

The complete *Phoenix* saga is a story about mankind that features a historical-narrative structure unlike anything that has come before it. The first volume depicts the dawn of civilization. The second volume jumps to the far future. The setting for the third story shifts back to early history, and so on, back and forth, from past to future; the amplitude decreases as past and future converge to meet in the present.

## Dawn (1967) 240-270 A.D.

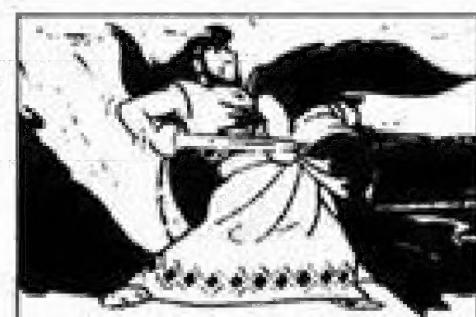
The era of Queen Himiko of the Yamatai Koku. The work quotes from the accounts of the *Gishiwajinden*. Also uses accounts from the legend of *Jinmu Tousei*.



The scene in the Amano Iwato myth where Himiko compares herself to Amaterasu-Omikami and a solar eclipse occurs.

## Yamato (1968-69) 320-350 A.D.

Based on the legend of Yamato-takeru-no-mikoto. The dates above were inferred from the account of Old Man Takeru, and from information in *Dawn*.



Disguised as a woman, Prince Yamato Ogura approaches the Chieftain of the Kumaso and stabs him. As told in the Kiki myth, the prince gets the name "Takeru" from his opponent right before he dies.

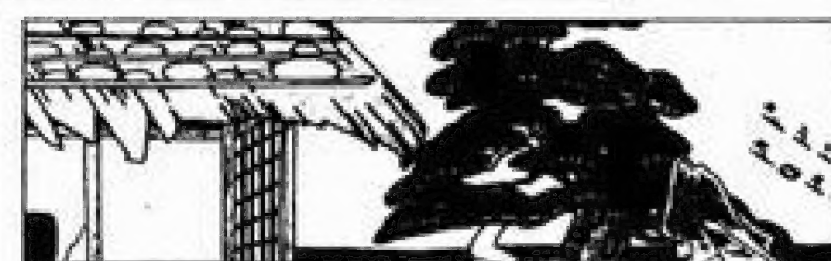
## Karma (Hou-ou) (1969-70) 720-752 A.D.

The complicated drama of the spirit of two Buddhist sculptors. Set in the Nara Period (710-794) during the national enterprise of the construction of the Great Buddha. Here, the Hou-ou (a Chinese myth) is the Phoenix.



Akanemaru, who has been ordered by the authorities to be in charge of the construction and design of the Great Buddha, is shocked when the statue sheds tears. The workers become frightened, and the bizarre phenomenon halts construction.

## Robe of Feathers (1971) 937-941 A.D.



The spirit of a fisherman is bewitched by the beauty of the woman and he hides her clothes...

A sci-fi version of the Hagoromo Legend of Miho no Matsubara in Enshu (modern day Shizuoka). Set during Taira no Masakado's rebellion which occurred during the Heian Period (898-1185).

The spirit of a woman swimming in the ocean is captured by the beauty of the white sand and green pine.

## Civil War (1978-80) 1172-1189 A.D.

The time of the Genpei Kassen (War between the Taira and the Genji) after the fall of the Heishi (Taira Clan). Using the *Heike Monogatari* and *Gikeiki* as a backdrop, this story depicts "combat" as the fate of living things.

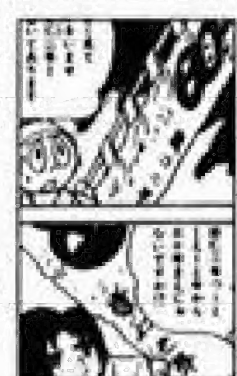


Kiso Yoshinaka defeats the Heishi and takes control of the capital. He cuts down the famous monk Myoun. He came to the capital because he is after the Phoenix.

## Strange Beings (1981) 1468-1498 A.D.

The Sengoku Period (1482-1558). Sakonnosuke, the heir of General Yagi Iemasa, cuts down the nun, Yaobikuni, who seems to be 800 years old. But she doesn't realize the true relationship between herself and the nun.

The banner bearer is saying that "now" is the beginning of the Sengoku Wars and they are in the middle of the Onin Rebellion. In other words, they are in a time before Sakonnosuke was born!



## Sun (1986-88) 663-672 A.D.

The story begins after the defeat of the Japan-Kudara alliance at Hakusukinoe and Japan's withdrawal from the Korean peninsula, and ends with the struggle for the imperial throne during the Jinshin Rebellion.



Emperor Kobun, formerly called Otomo no Miko, is the cousin of Takachi no Miko, who is the son of Oama no Miko.

## Future (1967-68) 3404 A.D.-infinity

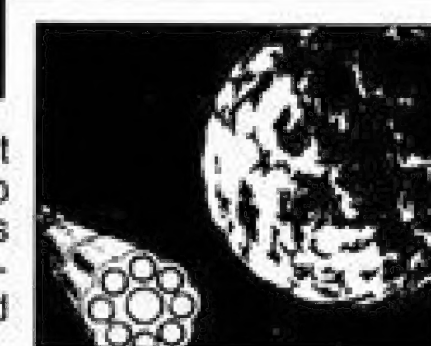
The end of the future. Mankind is in decline and has become very conservative. The earth is run down and faces devastation. Eventually a nuclear war breaks out causing the end of everything.

The Yamato Central Main Building Megalopolis. Yamato is one of the five remaining underground cities of mankind.



## Universe (1969) 2577 A.D.

In Orion, a sub-light speed rocket heading towards Earth crashes into a meteorite. The ship becomes unable to fly and four people manage to escape, including Saruta and Nana.



Each of the passengers escapes in an individual escape pod. However, the pods only have enough food for half a year and enough air for a year and a half. Possibilities of survival are...

## Resurrection (1970-71) 2482-3344 A.D.

In the year 3344, Prof. Saruta lands on the moon. He meets and acquires Robita in his final form. Spanning 860 years, the end of this episode goes beyond *Universe* and close to the beginning of *Future*.

Robita and this rocket also make appearances in *Future*, where Robita stops Rock and then gets shot by him.



## Nostalgia (1976-78) Indeterminate (approx. 25th century)

A Japanese woman named Romy establishes a civilization and history for the formerly uninhabited planet, Eden-17. Her husband dies an unnatural death, but the life she carries inside her...

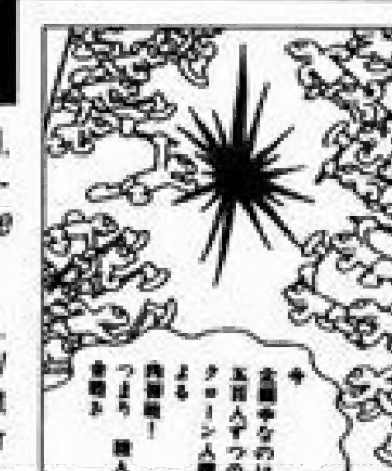


The spaceship is headed for Eden-17. The shiny object in the foreground is its sun. The planet is surrounded by a revolving ring of space dust held there by gravity.

## Life (1980) 2155-2170 A.D.

Human clones are being created. It's all for high ratings and a public-killing TV game show called *Clone Man Hunt*.

Animal clones were created for food. Human clones are created for a TV show—the cloning company president speaks as a sponsor. A terrifying plan for a TV show!



## Sun (1986-88) 2008 A.D.

The "Light Tribe" acquired the Phoenix in space. However, they turn it into an icon and come to control society through religion. Non-believers are called "shadows" and are chased out to live underground.

The head temple of the "Light Tribe." A young shadow boy named Suguru endeavors to climb the great tower and steal the Phoenix.

